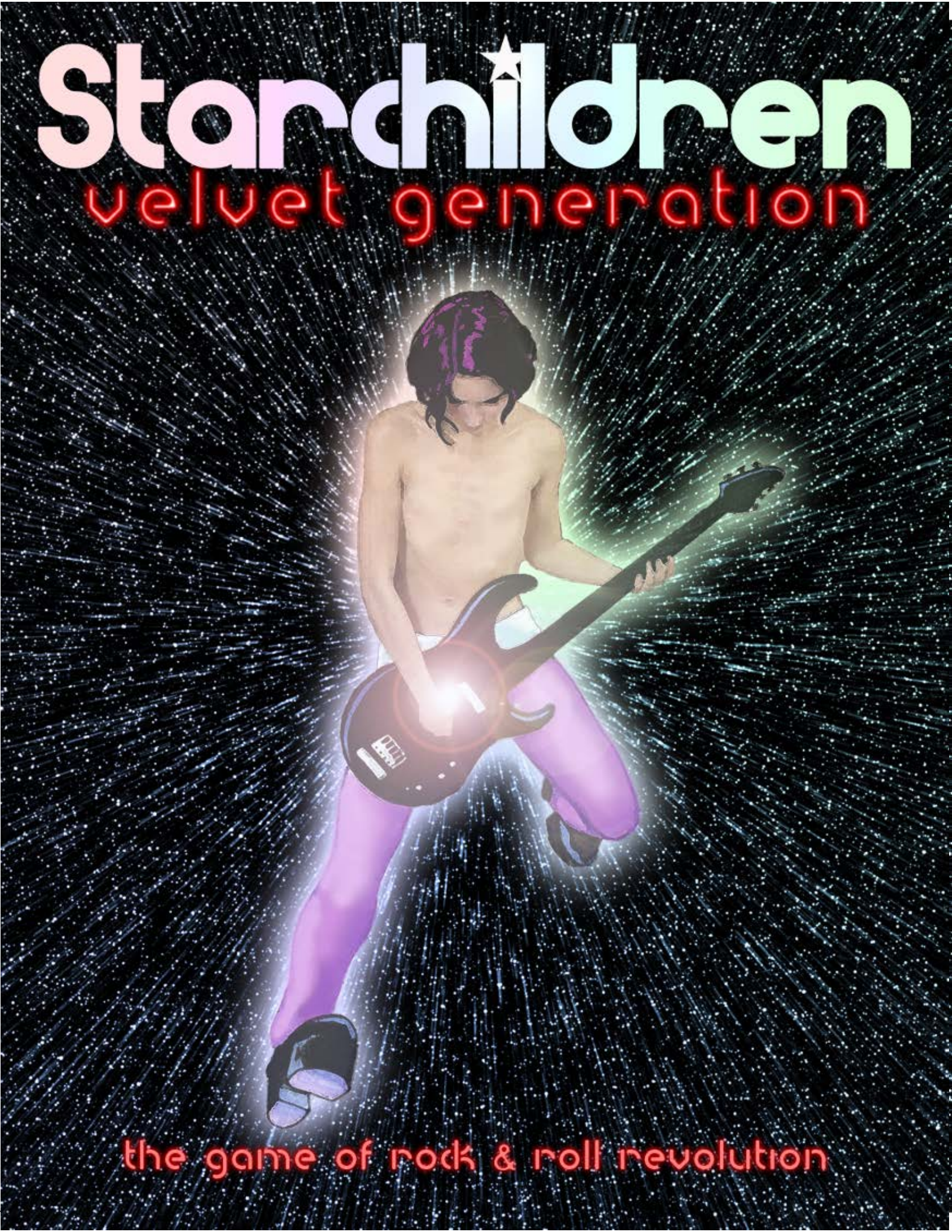
Starchildren

velvet generation



the game of rock & roll revolution

Starchildren
velvet generation

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Tonya Ratz

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Gareth-Michael Skarka

Shane Lacy Hensley

Mario Lee Bansen III

Ron Edwards and The Forge

Sandy Atunes and RPGnet

Joe Murphy

and the Mudshark.

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Scott Leaton uses only Zildjan heads and skins.

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Rich Ranallo drinks only Captain Morgan Spiced Rum

Although this book contains numerous references to sex, drugs and rock & roll, XIG Games does not officially endorse any such activities, except under the guidance of a competent professional.

Starchildren: Velvet Generation contains backward masking that makes a clear message when the game is played backward, and which may be perceptible at a subliminal level when played forward.

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Printed in Canada
ISBN: 0-9721538-0-2

Table of Contents

Chapter One:
Future Legend 4

Playing the Game 4
Reading the Book 5
Getting Started 5

Chapter Two:
As the World Falls Down 7

Introduction 7
Setting the Scene – 2040 to 2073 7
The State of Music in 2073 9

Chapter Three:
Revolution Rock 15

Equipment Hunting 16
Appropriating Food and Drug 17
Girlfriends and Boyfriends 18
Getting Into the Scene 18
Avoiding the Law 20
Velvet 21
The Starchildren 24
The Blue Army 24

Chapter Four:
2000 Light Years From Home 27

Radio Free Cosmos 32
The Arrival 33
Anatomy of a Starchild 33
The Alien Lifestyle 34

Chapter Five:
Children of the Revolution ...37

Image Is Everything 37
Goodbye To Yesteryear 37
The Character Sheet 37
Descent 37
Backgrounds 38
Skills 43
Edges and Flaws 51
Getting Equipped 57
Hitting The Road 57

Chapter Six:
Get it On 61

Cards 59
Basics 62
Violence 67
The Road to Recovery 75
Performance 76
Mojo 78
Socializing 85
Hide-and-Seek 86
Learning Experiences 87
Drugs 88
Scrounging 91
Equipment 91

Chapter Seven:
Waiting for The Man 103

Running the Game 103
Backstage 105
Action Cards 105
Drawing Injuries 105
Fame 109
The Ministry of Music 112
The Osterberg Institute 117
Blackholes 122
The Blue Army 124

Chapter One: Future Legend

In the future, historians will write about the 2070s as a decade of revolution, awakening and discovery. The people of Earth will discover that they are not alone in the universe, and will abandon a culture that threatens to destroy creativity and kill the human spirit. Fueled by rock music from beyond the stars, this Velvet Generation is a force that does nothing but gain strength from the moment the first of the mysterious Starchildren set foot on Earth on the Eighth of January, 2071.

We join the action in the spring of 2073, a little more than two years after the landing of the Starchildren. In response to the growing resistance movement, the Ministry of Music begins a terrifying crackdown on illegal and subversive rock music. Velvet, the underground rock organization brought to life by the aliens' arrival, is experiencing internal turmoil as their more radical and violent members break away to form the Blue Army. The Osterberg Institute, a secretive group of paranoid and xenophobic scientists, sets their sights on the Starchildren, who they perceive as agents of an "alien invasion." In this grim time, it seems as if the world will never awaken from this dreary nightmare. But make no mistake, change is on its way. And when it finally comes, the whole world will rock.

Playing the Game

If you've ever played a roleplaying game before, the basics of this one shouldn't come as much of a surprise. If you're new to this type of game, there are a few things you should know first. This game is played by a group, usually about three to seven people. Most people in the group are players, and each portrays a single role in the story, creating and developing a character (also called a player character, or PC for short) as they go along.

One member of the group is called The Man, and narrates any parts of the story that happen outside of a player's control. In effect, The Man plays the rest of the world. This means that any character not portrayed by a

player is "The Man's character" (or MC for short). Although The Man sets the stage by narrating the actions of MCs and events surrounding the player characters, players do more than just passively listen to the story. A player is in control of her character's actions at all times and decides how to react to the situations The Man sets up for her.

Because freeform roleplaying can't cover every situation that comes up during the game, this book also includes a rules system, which can be found in Chapters Five and Six ("Children of the Revolution" and "Get it On"). These rules are there to help the group along in the story, not to take the place of narration, and The Man can decide at any time to simply narrate events rather than letting the rules determine them.

Reading the Book

This book describes the game setting in a somewhat unusual way, so an explanation may be in order. The story of the Velvet Generation is being told as a sort of flashback. Chapters Two through Four of this book help bring the setting to life, and are written from the points of view of people who lived through it.

Chapter Two is a bit of a history lesson, describing events that set the stage for the rock & roll revolution. Chapter Three is an account of the rocker's life, including information on the underground movement known as Velvet. Chapter Four offers details about the Starchildren.

Chapter Five tells players what goes into creating a character, from her personality and background to the statistics and numbers that describe her abilities. Chapter Six explains the where, how and why of the rules.

Chapter Seven is for The Man's eyes only, containing tips on running the game and detailed information about the opposition facing the player characters.

Throughout the book, the sidebars will help illustrate certain points, provide more details about the setting, give examples of how the rules work, and present optional rules that The Man can include if he chooses.

The Pronoun Question

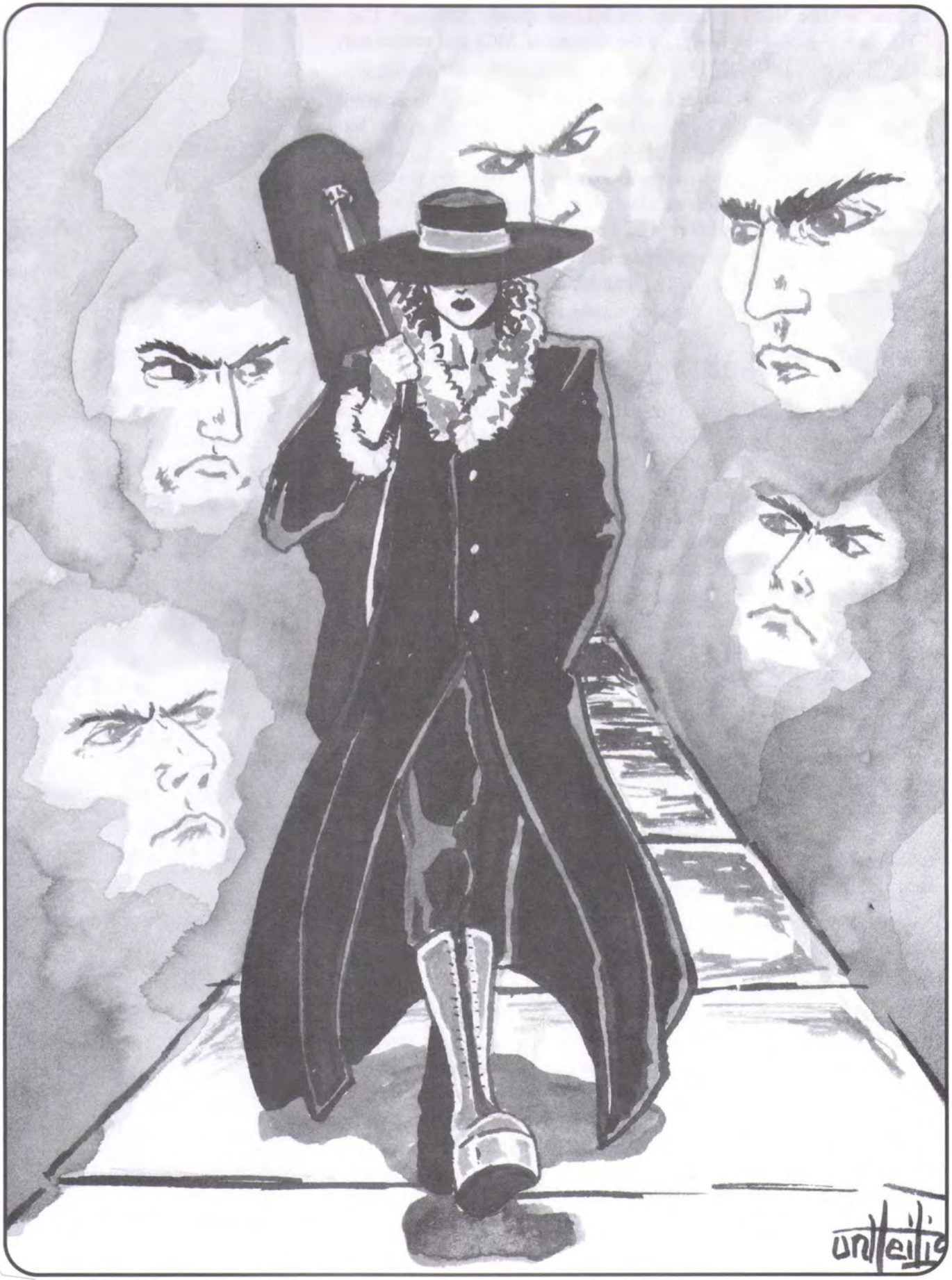
In the parts of this book that are addressed directly to players (mainly chapters five through seven), players and player characters are referred to with female pronouns (she, her, etc.), while The Man and MCs are called by male pronouns (he, his, etc.). Obviously, we don't mean to imply that players must be female, or that The Man necessarily has to be a man; rather, we've done this in order to keep things clear when explaining the rules.

Getting Started

It's recommended that you read through the entire book before sitting down to play. If you're the impulsive sort, you can get away with just reading a bit about the setting and the rules for making a character.

The Man should read the whole book before starting a game. Groups tend to have a lot more fun if the person running the game has a thorough understanding of the setting and a good handle on the rules.

Also, groups need a few pieces of equipment to play. The rules require at least two decks of playing cards (including both jokers) and some inexpensive counters (about 20 will do). Photocopies of the character sheet from the back of the book are helpful as well, but these can be easily improvised.



Chapter Two:
As the World Falls Down

The following is an excerpt from the book The Velvet Generation: Rock & Roll in 2073 *(Diamond Tooth Press, 2091) by Diedre Podulka-Casablancas, music historian and journalist for* New York Rock. *Used with permission.*

Introduction

The pigs of the past have stolen much of pop's colorful history and wiped it from existence so thoroughly that we might never get it back. And if most of those neophobic, water-blooded bastards weren't in nursing homes right now, I'd personally beat the sprinkles out of them for it. To be fair, I can't really complain; they *are* the reason I get to write this book, after all.

I'm not going to grouse about how kids today don't know their roots, and neither should anyone else. There's a lot missing from our history books these days. No real newspaper would run an accurate story about the cult-music scene back then, and no reliable books were written about it; an inescapable system of shush-laws, now repealed, prevented any unauthorized public documentation of the world of illegal music. The modern researcher is thus, for the most part, screwed.

Today, all curious people have to go on are the remains of a few underground magazines, and now-declassified police and government documents about the "purposeful corruption of youthful hearts and minds." If blatant propaganda isn't your thing, there's always the much more colorful (and, arguably, less biased) testimony of those aging rockers of the so-called "Velvet Generation" – at least, the ones who can sort through the drugs and noise enough to remember it all.

This book is the latter: I was there, and I have the pleasure of being able to remember. It is for the benefit of rockers and fans today (that's you, dear reader) that I dig yesteryear up, dust it off, and plug it back in.

Setting the Scene – 2040 to 2073

Next time you're shopping for plastic silverware, stop a moment and give a listen. You'll most likely hear the same heartless whine that plays in fast-food restaurants, elevators, and office lobbies: bland, artificial, and offensively indifferent. While we may have more colorful words to describe it, the proper term for this filth is "waiting music."

Before the Velvet Generation, the only thing listeners were waiting for was something else to listen to. It looked like they might never get it, either!

The Evil Power of Music

In the early 2040s, a new wave of fearful psychologists and sociologists had decided that most contemporary music was "emotionally manipulative," and that its far-reaching effects on the human mind were seeds of disaster. If this dangerous tool was left in the hands of careless citizens, they reasoned, musicians could incite mass depression, crime, or promiscuity, all through the power of carefully constructed and executed song-craft.

At the time, the concerned masses simply ate this rubbish up, like it was free refill night at the Brain-Death Cafe. It's widely held that most people back then were just anxious to herald in the sunny utopia that failed to arrive at the turn of the century. Times were tough, after all; the impact of a long and painful world war was still being felt. Money was tight,

crime was at an all-time high, and a class war was beginning to bubble across the globe.

The weary masses wanted solutions, and their governments wanted solidarity. Gears began to turn upstairs; at the G13 summit of '46, hearings on the subject of cultural correction were held, and the blueprints for a global cultural authority were carefully drawn.

The Beginning of the End

Once the public found out what the Man was planning to do, unprecedented demonstrations and protests began. Activists stormed record shops, television stations, and every government building they could find, armed with signs, chants, and journalism students. Lawns were ruined and people lost sleep, but these demonstrations were, initially, quite peaceful. The *real* trouble started in the spring of 2047, when four people – one cop and three kids – were killed in Times Square during a protest gone bad. It was the first in a long series of violent skirmishes occurring across the Western world. Of course, the authorities responded with "more than equal force" (read, "excessive"), and the silencing of America became much more brutal on both sides of the police line.

Police footage of the riots taking place were circulated to every major news agency. For a week straight, mom and dad were watching Teenage Armageddon take place in their television rooms, played back in slow motion, over and over. The world had seen enough. It was taken as frightening proof of modern music's ability to induce mass hysteria. Within two short years, music was considered a controlled substance in most of the world's countries.

Isolation, not Insulation

Civilized society, embracing "Sociomemetic Psychology," adopted a policy of silence and suppression towards potentially disruptive material. How a child was intentionally reared, it was held, was seen as less behaviorally influential than what the child learned from his or her culture, consciously or subconsciously. The cure for our societal woes, they said, was to ensure the culture around us was free of negative influence; the popular slogan of the day was, "Don't insulate, isolate!"

Controlling a culture was easier said than done. How does one control artists, musicians, writers and programmers? The answers frightened even some of the psychologists' staunchest supporters, but by then it was far too late.

The Ministries Arrive

To resolve the problem of sorting out good art from bad art, the world's governments assembled a panel of experts. This panel, a transnational and globally authoritative agency, became the infamous *International Culture Correction and Control* (ICCC). The ICCC was divided into several smaller ministries, one for each particular problem area; there were ministries for books, art, games, you name it. Our particu-

lar plight (as rockers) came from the Ministry of Music, or as its victims called it, "Mad Mother."[1]

The Ministry of Music was always seen as the leader of the other Ministries. After all, the "rock scare" of the 2040s was responsible for the very existence of the Ministries; while public concerns spread to other creative mediums, music remained the original example of cultural corruption. In addition, music, by its very nature, is a very emotional means of expression. Due mostly to the fervent nature of music lovers, it was by far the most difficult medium for ICCC to control. So it was that Mad Mother led by example, kicking down the door through which the other Ministries swiftly marched, torches in hand.

After a grace period, in which public collection of newly-illegal CDs and paraphernalia were collected punishment-free, the official ban on unapproved music became strictly enforced. From then on, anyone caught with possession of illicit materials was harshly punished, from the neighborhood rock dealers to the absent-minded elderly.

The State of Music in 2073

"If we clean the world up for future generations, we will give them a strong and stable foundation of love and respect. And on this strong, stable foundation, our children can build the safe, prosperous future humanity has been longing for!"

–President Callahan, 2070 Address

The story of the revolution begins in 2073. This was two years after the Starchildren first came to Earth, quietly and without fanfare, and it was the year we heralded in what we now call the Velvet Generation. That year could easily be seen as the beginning of the world's recovery, as small as that beginning was. It was a strange time to be alive, with freedom and restraint struggling to eat each other whole.

The Lamentable End of the Record Industry

Following Mad Mother's rise to policy-making status, the music recording industry took some severe blows. Publicly, it subsisted only on the meager sales of permitted musical fare; the structured rituals of production and promotion within the industry became harder to support with each drop in sales, until finally only about forty or fifty "artists" worldwide (now merely uncelebrated tradesmen) were professionally represented at any given time.

Some of these permissible recordings were classical or jazz-oriented (and still monitored for emotional effect), but the chief market was that of "new music:" synthesized, unoriginal, sleep-inducing garbage, usually only sold in supermarkets and gas stations. There was even less money to be had in music radio, and that too was dying out. The record companies that operated in accordance with Mother's specifications either died or shrank to little cottage companies.

Some record companies, however, weren't willing to simply die out. Like the bootleggers of the 20th century's Prohibition, many executives took their business to the streets. There was still money to be made from real music and the market was wide open!

Musicians, legal...

By 2073, being a musician was either dull or illegal, no matter what instrument you played.

If someone wanted to be a career musician, their only option was to apply for a permit and wait for a private evaluation. Once you'd gotten a permit, you were handed a catalog of tolerated music (a repertoire produced by the curmudgeonly Union of Songwriters), which was all you were allowed to play.

The accepted songs were always uninspiring and dull. Everything from the Tycho Deathrays[2] to Igor Stravinski had been evaluated and, with few exceptions, deemed "too negative" or "too positive." That usually left freelance musicians with a songbook full of that horrible stuff that we rock journalists try not to think about.

1 This term probably originates from the badge of the Ministry's enforcers, which featured the letters "MM" in large green letters. Others insist it was simply a jab at the Ministry's then-current leader, Virginia Pratch, although I happen to know we were using it before she had taken power

2 You kids probably have no idea who they are... The Deathrays were the latest thing, right before everything went to hell. I don't know if they went underground, and I certainly don't know what they're up to these days, but I like to hope they're not writing ad jingles or something.

The Rise of Pinball

Shortly after the inception of the Ministry of Sport and Competition (or Ministry of Games), video games and competitive sports became subject to strict guidelines. No games are presently allowed to involve, reward, or otherwise contain any violence or antisocial behavior, including most forms of direct competition. Video games are also tested for negative stimulation levels, which ultimately strike down all but the dreariest puzzle and story-based games. Board games, wargames, and role-playing games are also severely monitored for potentially subversive content. These restrictions reduced most sports and games to bland hobbies, with many surviving only on the support of the underground.

Certain games, however, are enjoying renewed popularity as a result of Ministry control. Sharing the spotlight with badminton and blacklight bowling, the most popular activity of young people in 2073 is, remarkably, old-fashioned table pinball!

While the machines are nowhere near as hip or interesting as they used to be, and the technology used hasn't gone forward since 2020, pinball is nonetheless a worldwide fad. Tournaments are common, although repeated victories are actively discouraged

... and Illegal

The other option, and by far the most appealing to most, was to play the underground circuit.

It wasn't a very glamorous job, most of the time. There wasn't much fame to go around, and musicians regularly "borrowed" songs from each other, which helped to keep anyone from getting due credit. Work was also hard to find; only the seediest dives in the dirtiest dims would dare give such lowlifes a gig. Thus, underground musicians didn't make much money, didn't get much glory, and they always ran the risk of tremendous fines or, in many cases, prison. Yeah, it was sexy as hell!

The Good Fight

Now, we've all got a picture in our heads of all the rockers teaming up and fighting the Man in some glorious sub-culture crusade, singing and dancing hand-in-hand and all that. This did indeed happen (after a fashion!), but not for a good while. At first, most musicians didn't even see any sort of movement taking place. Without broad media coverage, any given city's music scene was almost totally unaware of what was going down elsewhere. It's hard to get a sweeping sense of current world events under conditions like those.

Another problem was that musicians had no intentions of starting a revolution. Most underground band members were in it for the thrill, after all. There was no "big picture" for us then, no course of action. Usually, band life was just a series of risky episodes, each night followed by a danger high and a little celebration. Our dreams were only as big as the next gig!

Then there was the problem of new blood. Word of mouth only goes so far, and public opinion had long been dictated by Mad Mother and her propaganda. Where could anyone find inspiration? How could everyone know what was going on, where to find it, what it sounded like?

Brother, did we need to get organized....

Velvet Takes Root

Velvet, the chief resistance among devotees of true music, didn't have very glamorous beginnings. A dozen or so kids in basements and alleys across New York City started something called the "Rock Resistance," way back in the autumn of 2070. It was a pretty loose affair, and aside from some gorgeous graf campaigns and some crappy short-run 'zines, it was hardly what you'd call a movement. Like I said, we were all in it for the thrills!

Eventually, our little club of vandals and punks solidified into something bigger – I myself attribute it to our ninth or tenth black-baton beatdown, but even without such cosmic slaps in the face, we were obviously on to something. Here in New York, people in the know started signing up for our "cause," and (after some rounds on popular boards and pirate satellite) word of our little group was spreading.

Soon, little copycat clubs were starting up in cities across the country. We were all helping bands quietly advertise, organizing shows (without any help from dirty-handed mobsters or disc pushers, mind you) and generally spreading the good word of Rock & Roll to any kid who'd listen.

The club's underground rags and hacked netsites could only do so much against a generation of well-financed "awareness campaigns," though. Read the wrong book, it was believed, and you might ruin your marriage. Hear the wrong tune, and you might lose your memory. Make the wrong friends, and you might lose your job. Better to wonder forever than regret forever; fears like that are hard to shake out of someone, no matter how many little stickers one sticks on the payphones.

Luckily, the Rock Resistance soon became Velvet, thanks to the dazzling inspiration and leadership of the Starchildren. We didn't know who (or what) they were, at the time, but we knew one thing – when they were involved, things clicked, and people noticed. Velvet took hold in almost every major city, and the scene began to swell…

The Revolution Begins

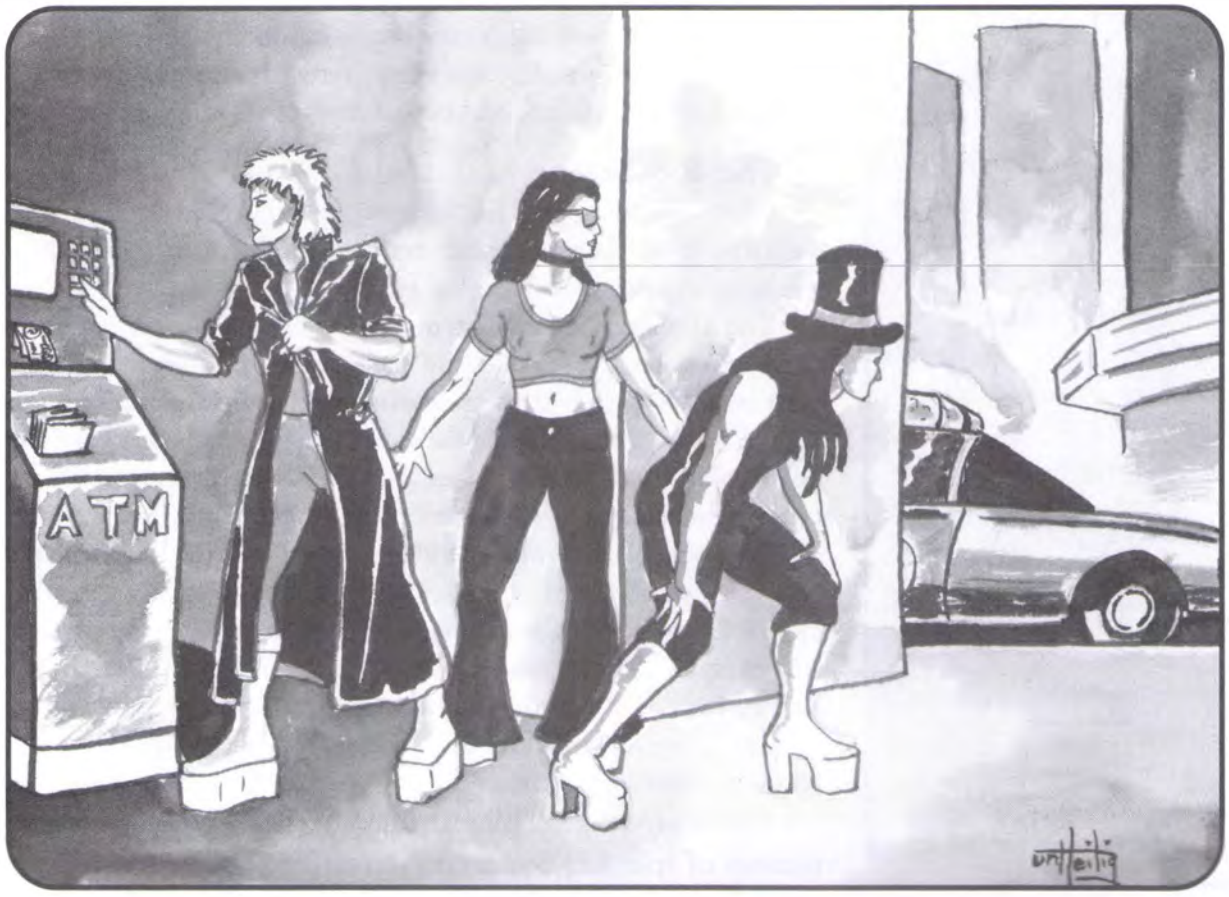
Beneath ol' Mother's nose, the world of music was changing. Bands were becoming more numerous, and the record business (and, sadly, their criminal owners) were booming. Thanks in no small part to Velvet, kids were growing increasingly aware of the music scene. Bands were getting reputations. Every day, our people were growing more dissatisfied with the powers that were. The youth had tasted forbidden

(standing champions lower self-esteem, according to the Ministry).

In spite of an unequaled number of units worldwide, Shock Force Crusader (the first Ministry-sponsored pinball machine) remains the least popular table in any pinball arcade.

The Free World

According to ICCC policy, member countries are subject to strict trade embargoes when dealing with non-member nations. These embargoes were wisely enacted after the three major world superpowers



(the United States, China, and the United Kingdom) were already participating in the program. This added economic pressure had most of the Western world eagerly signing up shortly thereafter.

Today, only a few countries remain outside Control's authority, most notably Japan, India, Pakistan, and Brazil. While travel between member and non-member countries is a difficult hassle, it's not impossible; nonetheless, the rock community is rife with ludicrous rumors about what life in "free countries" is like. Above all others, as a result of these rumors, Japan has risen to a legendary status among the rock underground as a place where people rock freely in the streets.

In truth, the freedom enjoyed in these countries barely makes up for the low standard of living. Fearing the rest of the world's increasingly violent attitude towards non-members, free countries maintain wartime-sized militaries, taxing their already enfeebled economies. Many activists in these countries would like nothing more than to see the foreign Ministries crumble. The black market today depends on such people for smuggled instruments, books, etc.

fruit, and they found it wasn't as poisonous as they'd been led to believe. All in all, it was rather like their world was waking out of a sleepy, gloomy dream, and it was time to tenderly explore our minds.

But that kind of happiness was criminal, and this of course meant the crime rate was going up. Police were having a hard time keeping it under control, as they were no longer equipped or experienced in mass suppression. The parents and politicians were getting pretty antsy, too; kids were becoming less gullible by the day. Illegal music, long thought to be a minor problem, was getting to be a serious social issue again!

Of course, at the most dramatic moment possible, the Ministry marched in with their big, heavy boots, harder than ever before. As far as they were concerned, it was finally time for a proper, world-silencing crusade – the self-described "Big Stomp" of 2073.

The Big Stomp

After a hefty appeal for increased power, Mad Mother was given authority to go beyond policy and investigation, to forcefully step in wherever the police had located trouble.

The Ministry did just that, quite a bit more forcefully than it had to. Show after show was raided by armor-clad Ministry grunts, and these raids ended in bloody riots more often than in the intended mass arrests. It didn't even seem to shake the kids, either – new bands kept springing up to take the old one's places, and the concerts were drawing larger crowds every day. It was getting pretty cramped in those garages and cellars; a popular joke was that it's never too crowded if there's no room for the troopers to get in!

To the authorities, it almost seemed as though we were under some sort of spell. They called it brainwashing, of course. We were seen as a new breed of dangerous fanatics, and our goal could only be the abolition of government and the onset of anarchy. (Okay, fine; for some of us, anarchy really was the goal. But every group has its wackos, right?)

The newly-vengeful Ministry quickly reassessed the situation, and a network of spies and field agents was sent out into the dims. They stud-

ied their enemy thoroughly, and found what was believed to be the source of the rebellious youth's failure to yield; namely, charismatic icons and leaders. A bewildered Ministry labeled these unique individuals "Chief Agitators," unaware that they had a name for themselves already: Starchildren.

While they didn't yet know the full truth about these beautiful new strangers, the Mommies weren't the least bit amused. The Ministry needed more information, and ICCC-friendly governments (fearing these "agitators" were some kind of foreign operation) were all to willing to help them out. A full investigation into the underground rock scene was launched, and Velvet's job got a whole lot harder!

It Begins

So that's how it all started, this Velvet Generation you've heard so much about. Mad Mother, champion of the man, was squaring off against our own champions – Velvet, the artists and musicians who led us to freedom, among them the brilliant Starchildren.

As the battle grew, many hearts changed sides, and many lives were either made or ruined. During it all, the world was left struggling to figure out just what it wanted for itself, and for its children.

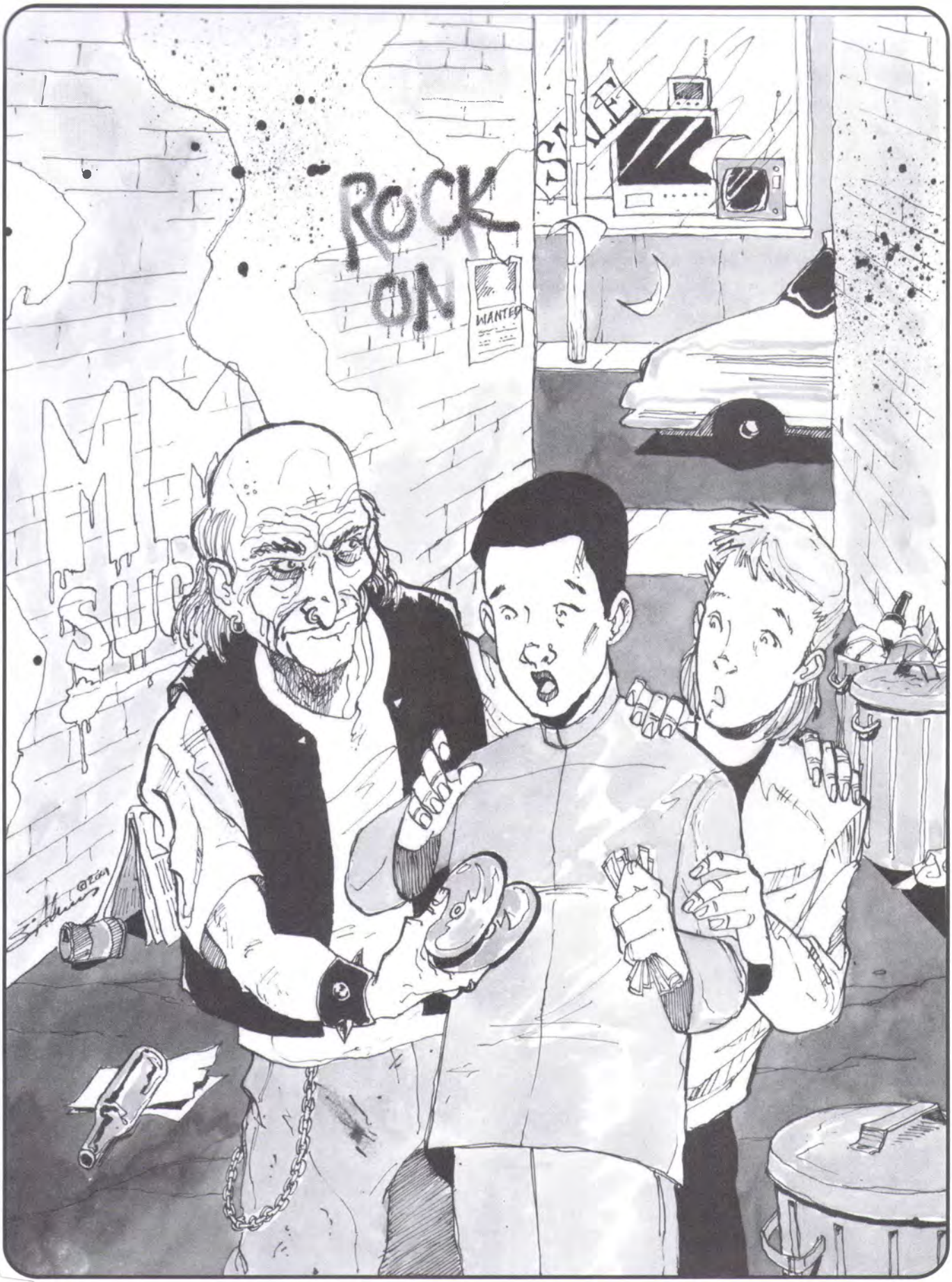
We knew what it wanted, though.

It wanted to rock…

Money

Believe it or not, the citizens of 2073 don't need a retinal scan to buy a chilidog. In fact, as far as currency is concerned, little has changed. Cash is now made of a flexible, durable polymer, while metal coins are still metal coins. Replacing all hard cash with "cash cards" has often been suggested in the past, but in the end, the people have preferred the familiar forms of bills and coins to digital funny money. For the cash-loathing minority, the applicability of credit or debit cards and "quickpay" keychains for any sort of purchase has proven satisfying enough.

Given the unusual materials and various security measures, creating counterfeit cash is as hard as it's ever been. For players with characters in the United States, we should also mention that U.S. currency, like other currency, is now available in every color of the bloody rainbow. Rejoice!


ROCK
ON
WANTED

Chapter Three: Revolution Rock

The following text is from a declassified Ministry document, dated August 9th, 2073. It transcribes the recorded dialogue between a covert researcher and the late Harvey Vanes, then a convicted roadie with two outstanding warrants for his arrest.

As with most documents released under the Ministerial Dissolution of 2091, portions of the file were "damaged" – conveniently, this only removed the agent's side of the conversation, and thus any traces of the agent's identity. It is otherwise remarkably complete.

Special thanks to our friends in the Chicago Center for Rock Research, for allowing us access to the archives. You're all cream to us!

[Begin surveillance file 73-VH-0809]

So you wanna be a rock star, eh? Yeah, I noticed you looking at the cello cases, and you don't exactly look like a card-carryin' cellist. I also noticed you're quite a nervous shopper, which tells me that you're a very green little music-man. Well, don't worry, love, I'm as safe as you'll find.

Allow me to introduce myself! Name's Harvey Vanes. I used to be in a band m'self, back in England. We called ourselves the Double Mees. Sort of a pop-rock-metal-reggae-synth sound, with some country and riot thrown in. I don't like labels. They're so limiting.

What did I play? Well, I suppose you could say I played the wheels. I was the head roadie for three glorious years, and I was the best in all east London. The band wouldn't have gotten on without me!

You stop laughin', or I'll have your dick stuffed with sharp rocks, an' then I'll beat your boyfriend with it. Road techs are an important – no, an invaluable part of a band. You're gonna need one, if you're serious about goin' in, and I recommend you start being nice to the ones you're lucky enough to meet! Got that?

In spite of your tactless ways, I like you. I can't say why, but you seem like a really nice lad to me. So nice, in fact, I'll give you some advice. I've been in this bloody business as long as anyone, and you look like you just fell out of an airplane full o' babies. Hell, if you last long enough out there, maybe I'll work for you myself!

Chips, Tapes and Discs

While computers and wireless phones are everywhere in 2073, trafficking music files on the network they use is far from easy. Unless you're using an illegal bulletin board (or the increasingly risky Internet), getting a sound file from one place to another usually calls for tangible media.

Discs: The standard medium for music today is the optical MCD, or "disc," which is about 2"x2" and enclosed in a colored plastic shell. Although they're rarely used to their full potential, a single MCD can record several days' worth of high-quality sound files.

Chips: Far more common among less wealthy fans and musicians is the use of memory chips. They're the size of a quarter, they work in just about anything, and easy to hide (and lose), but most importantly, they're cheap!

The Digizdat, an inexpensive chip-compatible Dictaphone,

Continued on Page 17

What, "Airplane full o' babies?" It's just an expression I came up with. You think it's that bad, don't repeat it. Jesus. Fancy a milkshake? You seem like the milkshake type, somehow.

[Note – At this time Agt. XXXXXXX and citizen Vanes walked to a nearby place of refreshment. A 43-second lapse in recording occurred when the subject led Agt. XXXXXXX under an elevated train.]

Equipment Hunting

What've you got in that duffel bag? What is that, a children's toy? It's a joke, is what it is. No, you need someone to set you up right. Used to be that you could go into a store not unlike this one, and there you might buy instruments other than these here electric flutes and fiddles. So I'm told, anyway.

Whether you believe that or not, you'll need to find some good instruments somewhere. There's two places to go for some good gear: Tinkerboys and black-marketeers. The black market'll get you better stuff (they've some immaculate axes in Japan, I'm told), but dealing with a Tinkerboy is less likely to draw heat. If you get caught dealing with the marketeers, you're a dead boy.

Forget I mentioned it. Go with a Tinker.

Tinkerboys

This is what we call guys who build illegal instruments. They know how to do things you don't, like make distortion pedals and straighten guitar necks. Most of 'em are complete solder-gun geeks, but they're eager to please.

Aside from manufacturers in the few countries Control hasn't slept with yet, Tinks are the only ones to turn to for a decent piece. They have to use some foreign bits, of course – all the steel guitar strings these days are smuggled out of Pakistan – but they don't draw much heat for small stuff like that. Is a good thing, too, because they can supply you with those bits that need replacement from time to time, like skins and picks.

You can find these guys working under any record company, although the less successful ones simply solicit their services to any bands they can find, usually at smaller gigs. The greatest thing about these guys is they're cheap – it's a labor of love for most of 'em, and they've all got day jobs to foot the bills. Besides, their clientele is usually broke, and they know it.

The Black Market

Look, like I said, don't use the black market. Get a nice enough manager, and he might shop it for you, seeing as he has less innocence to lose.

Oh, I know, looking in a marketeer's wares-filled trunk is hell on the willpower. Some have gorgeous vintage stuff, solid ware that's decades old. Sometimes, they even have some really glorious guitars – and I mean glorious, as in made by angels or something. I think they're Japanese models or something.

[Note – Citizen Vanes may be referring to items similar to the recently confiscated vapor-class musical device, which is of unknown material and design. Scribe suggesting further inquiry, if subject is arrested.]

Anyway, my point is that once you get involved with marketeers, you're asking for nothing but broken bones. They make money on drugs and guns as well as gear, see. These guys are big game in the eyes of the law, and if cops know you're involved, they'll chew up you and everyone you know just to get to the top.

See this busted smile? Yeah, well, it wasn't some crazy dentist, kid. Trust me on this.

Appropriating Food and Drug

You've got a day job, I'll wager. Keep it. If you've got a night job, quit it and get a day job. I don't care what you've been told, you're not going to make much money playing rock an' roll.

Some general advice! Two things you want to avoid are drugs and lovers, because they'll suck you dry, no mistake. And being a musician is going to give you plenty of shots at both.

Are you listenin' to me, or checking out the counter boy? Jesus, you're in for trouble. Why, if I were writing a book on advice for rockers, I'd have a whole chapter entitled:

[Note – the following 74 seconds have been included in this transcript for completeness.]

has become standard equipment for underground musicians. The tiny built-in microphone is less than ideal, but it gets the job done!

Another benefit of chips is the ease of duplication. Because of their universal application, anyone with so much as a pocket calculator can transfer files directly from one chip to another – a common activity among music-loving students.

Vinyl: If you think vinyl records got a raw deal in the late 20th century, you're not going to like the late 21st much. Just about all records made prior to the formation of the ICCC were burned or confiscated, and genuine 20th-century vinyl is impossibly difficult to find.

These days, vinyl is only produced by tinkers and "record fetishists," usually through scratchbuilt pressing equipment and scavenged "wax." (Curiously enough, the most common source of record pressing materials are chest X-rays, usually pilfered from hospital dumpsters!)

Record players invariably come from the same place as records themselves, and are even harder to find. The Ministry keeps a few around, of course, to verify the content of confiscated albums.

Aside from the aforementioned tinkers and wax-lovers, the only people who really need vinyl are those DJs who

like to mix and scratch the old-fashioned way. Having a real honest-to-god record collection is quite an accomplishment, especially considering how hard it is to hide a shelf full of the bloody things!

Tapes: There haven't been real tapes in decades, of course, the word "tape" is just hip slang among the fringe element, and may be used to refer to any music medium whatsoever.

The Media

Digital radio and television are still around, in spite of the tight regulations imposed by the Ministry of Communications. Government-owned stations are commonplace, as are licensed commercial broadcasters. The programming found on radio or TV these days is all heartbreakingly bland, of course, unless you're fortunate enough to catch some pirate radio…

Pirate Radio!

While it's hard to pull off without staying on the move, unlicensed pirate radio remains a common tool for ambitious revolutionaries. Every city has a couple of "air pirates" at any given time, scofflaws who overpower local broadcasts for short periods of time and insert their own quality programming.

Girlfriends and Boyfriends

…and I'd use it to warn everyone once and for all that they'll only cost you money needed for necessities, like pills and guitar strings. Not only that, but lovers have a habit of gettin' scorned, and it only takes one crazy ex calling the Ministry tip-line to make you miserable forever.

Damned right, I'm bitter! But that's a story for another time, boy. I'd very much like to change the subject, and while we're talking about money, I might as well tell you how to get a real job – a music job!

Getting Into the Scene

Probably the easiest way to get a gig is to hit the Underground and ride to some dim spots. You know, old slums, ghost-hoods, whatever. Every town I've ever seen has places like this. You'll know dims by the pretty lights – red, green, blue – everything's colorful and dark. I don't know why. Maybe bright white lights attract cops or something.

Dives

Anyway, down in the dims is all of where bands manage to play in public. All you have to do is find the guy what owns the place, and say you want to play a gig. These places rely on music to draw in lots of drink-buying bodies, and they're sure to squeeze you in, or keep you on call just in case something opens up.

This is still pretty bloody illegal, mind, but there's more dives in the dims than hard-working cops. Besides, no one cares much about the dimmers, as long as there aren't too many bodies in the street. That's the plus side – you can play without being signed.

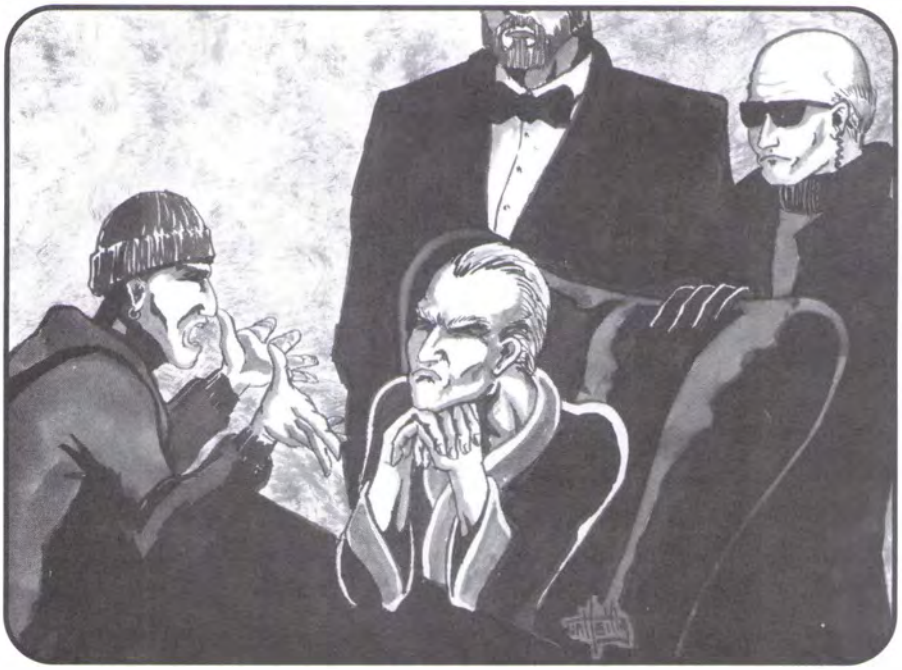
The minus side is that everyone expects bands there to be shit, a tragedy which is perhaps due to the fact that a majority of the bands there are, in fact, complete shit. This of course means you'll get paid rather little, if you're lucky enough to be paid in anything but piss beer. Hang in there, though – keep a recorder hidden somewhere, and mind the exits in case things get ugly.

The recorder is for makin' a demo tape, nutjob! You'll need to make a demo, preferably with people cheerin'. That's half the reason you need to play in dives… What, you want to play in dives forever? No, sooner or later you'll want to get signed. It's the only way everyone's ever gonna hear your stuff.

[Note – The term "tape" is commonly used among the criminal element as a slang term for a common data disc, possibly relating to the slim shape of such discs. Consult civilian ops manual 166.]

The Creation and Distribution of Audio Evidence

I'm assuming you practice in an abandoned parking garage or something similar. Making a tape in your own joint that doesn't sound dead horrible might be a bit tough, unless one of you boys can afford a soundproof pad. This is mostly why I recommend you tape one of your



bar shows – the acoustics are better, and if you're not as lousy as I suspect, you might even get some cheers.

Don't let the barkeep catch you, mind; they call tapes like that "evidence," and it's a bit like wearin' a wire to a record lord's birthday party.

["Wire" is more slang, meaning concealed surveillance equipment. Consult civilian ops manual 166.]

The next step is finding someone to give it to. Don't give that blasted tape to anyone but the label's manager himself! These things disappear like magic (kids love free music, after all), and more importantly, pigs often pose as "talent scouts" when they're feeling clever.

Managers

Lean, mean, and bloody hard to disagree with, the record managers today resemble nothing so much as the pimps of a hundred years ago. Most of their overhead costs consist of bribing cops and hiring thugs, and many are involved in other illegal rackets (especially drugs). Music represents a big part of their businesses, yeah, but it's by no means the only part. Remember, kids, you're only alive to play music, not to deliver packages or "taste-test!" Don't let a manager pull you into anything but straight gigs, or there'll be trouble. Money, yeah, but also lots of trouble.

A single manager represents several bands, arranging for shows and handling the proceeds himself. Bands get a cut of the profit, of course, but until a band becomes well-known, it won't be much.

Getting Signed, Finally

So you've got the tape, and now you need to put it in a manager's pocket. Finding the manager at a show isn't hard; any of the bouncers will gladly take you straight to him, if you pester them enough – they'll probably just sit back and hope the boss orders them to knock your snot out. He might wait and hear you out instead, if you're lucky!.

Pirates are, by necessity, quite crafty and techno-savvy. Perpetually transient and sporadically active, most pirates broadcast through a laser-fed dummy receiver, making them very hard to catch. Trust us, though – when these bad boys are caught, some rather grim examples are made.

Over-the-Counter

As much as the public in 2073 is opposed to rock music, they're even more opposed to drug use. Both are considered to have horrible influence on the mind, making people think all sorts of crazy things. In fact, the public opinion on drugs is so low; that most people wouldn't even take drugs for medicinal purposes.

Drug manufacturers have found an innovate solution to this problem. They simply don't tell the public that they're taking drugs. TV and talk radio are still swimming with ads for anti-depressants, painkillers and smart pills, but they never include the word "drug." Instead, every sort of medication is color-coded. Despite the fact that half the people in the world can't go a day without taking something to make them feel better, none of them consider themselves "drug users." Citizens know that Whitepills cure headaches, but they don't know how or why.

This idea has proved enormously effective in getting some very dangerous medications approved for over-the-counter sales. Antibiotics (or Greenpills) are the only remaining prescription drugs, and that's only because doctors don't want everyone building up immunities. Some of the drugs available to the public are:

Whitepills: Low-powered painkillers and headache medicine.

Graypills: Medium-strength painkillers, similar to what used to be prescribed for injured people.

Blackpills: Incredibly overpowered painkillers, Blackpills are equivalent to what used to be reserved for patients in the final stages of terminal disease.

Bluepills: Smart pills, and a favorite of all students, from Kindergarten on up.

Purplepills: Supposedly a cure for anxiety, these help make shy people talkative and friendly.

Redpills: Sleeping aids.

Yellowpills: Waking aids. Usually, Redpills and Yellowpills are sold in the same bottle.

Most of these drugs aren't potent enough to have game effects, but those that do are listed in the Equipment section of Chapter Six.

Give this guy the tape, and he might "set you boys right up" on the spot; more likely he'll just give you his card and see you again at the next show. This isn't always a rejection, though; he might just have to play it for some test kids first.

Soon enough, you'll know if you've been accepted or rejected. Either way, the band must play on! Perseverance is half of success, and don't you forget it.

Avoiding the Law

Slipping by the Man is something you'd better learn the easy way, which is basically listening to me. The hard way involves hard time, money, and possibly the loss of a bloody great lot of blood. Get your head cleared up and listen, now.

Firstly, when you walk around, don't dress like you're some crazy musician. I don't know where you got those Martian threads – don't get me wrong, you've got a lot of style – but you'd best not go parading through the city like that. For Marc's sake, wear a trenchcoat over it or something! You practically scream "hey, piggy love, I'm a rocker, get your bat and call for backup."

Those boots are quite nice, mind…

Music Permits

Collapsible rubbish guitars aside, you won't be able to hide a real guitar in that duffel bag of yours, and I'll wager that's why you're looking at cello cases. That's good thinking; legal instrument cases are an excellent choice for moving guitars. Problem is, cops know it. This is why you need to get a fake musician's permit to stick on it.

What, you don't know what a music permit is? Jaysis, what planet are you from?

Hey, settle down, I didn't mean to be rude. You're just greener than I thought, is all. To answer your question, it's a little piece of plastic that says you're a legal musician. Once you've got one, you can get special badges to stick on your music cases, jackets, whatever. A suspicious cop can scan one of these with a little laser gun from a distance, and ascertain whether or not it's worth his time to search you. It won't exactly make your guitar invisible, but it helps.

Permits can be gotten one of two ways: learning to play some silly, useless Ministry-approved instrument, or buying a copy of one from a legal musician with rocker sympathies. I recommend the latter, because it doesn't take years of training and testing in some useless area of music.

Oh, I suppose it's not useless to play a violin or something. I've heard some great rock songs with 'em in it. It's just that they'll always take a back seat to the real deal. I'm talking' about steel strings and amplifiers, here.

If you do play a legal instrument (in an illegal way, of course), then you definitely need a permit. Tinkerboys and marketeers don't bother

with that sort of thing, so you'll need to use an actual Ministry-authorized music shop, such as this one. Plus, you can make some money on the side selling extra badges!

Legal instruments include the light stuff – violins, cellos, flutes, that sort of thing. Basically, anything you have to plug in is a big no-no, with the exception of keyboards. There's lots of legitimate pianists out there who play electric keys, so these are legal. Illegal keyboardists have it easy in that respect. Most of 'em are pansies, anyway, so I suppose it's for the best.

Look, I've got to split. Here's my number; gimme a call tomorrow, and we'll see about getting you set up with a proper guitar, right? Lovely. By the way, I didn't happen to catch your name, mister…?

[73-VH-0809 – End of file.]

[At the time this following transcript was recorded, Agent XXXXXXX and his band had just completed their most successful gig thus far, and Agent XXXXXXX had presumably gone up to street level for some fresh air. It was at this time when agent XXXXXXX encountered citizen Vanes for the second, and final, time. The following is a transcript of their recorded conversation.]

[File 74-VH-0430 Vanes, Harvey (Cit.) Supplemental surveillance record – 30.04.74

Transcribed by MMCO op E. J. Wong-Hirsch 05.23.74]

Kid! Funny meeting you out here. Right, not that funny, since you're the reason I came here in the first place. Man, it's good to see you again, now that you're a real rocker once and for all! Been hearing about you guys all over. Talk of the scene these days, your band is. Brother, when I saw your photo on the cover of that rag *Glammer*, I had a litter of kittens.

Suppose you're wondering why I'm here. Well, it's kind of a long story… let's take a walk.

[Following citizen Vanes away from the venue, Agent XXXXXXX proceeded southwards down Red Street.]

Your band has really established itself as a local phenomenon, kid. You reach a lot of people, more every day. You do good work, I think. We think. See… well, we figure you've been ready for us for a long time.

Ready for what? Ready for a real job! Ready to make a difference! Ready for the Resistance! N.Y. Starship's my outfit; I'm a recruiter, and we represent the Greater Rock & Roll Resistance in this particular neighborhood.

Wipe that stoned look off your face, mate! You heard me right. But forget all those stories you've heard, about the Blue Army and all that. I'm with Velvet, and it's the real deal.

Hey, calm down. Let's look at the big picture, here. Playing in shows and making some nice pocket is all well and good – but you know it could be more than that. A lot more. See, rock & roll these days ain't what it could be. Bands are either run by the shitheads in the mob, or they're tiny small potatoes. When you think about it, playing music in fear and dancing behind the world's back, it's just no good, right? And the present method of getting by – lumping music in with the same lowlifes who deal in whores and crack – frankly, it isn't the best thing for music in the long run. We all want something bigger, something better, but most don't think we can really change anything outside of our own dingy sub-standard existence.

Well, my friend, Velvet thinks there's a fight to be won. If we can get enough people to even imagine a future where everyone's able to rock out and speak their minds, where dancing is legal and the mob's out of our kid's backyards, the world will start to wake up. And, eventually, yeah, we can make it happen.

Yeah, roll your eyes if you like. We've gotta try, eh?

Walk a bit faster, now. That curry van looks a bit out of place…

Velvet

Right, here's a history lesson for you. Some years ago, a pack of glitter kids in New York City started this little gang, which they called Velvet. They drew up the framework of an organized resistance, calling itself Velvet, and proceeded to plant little Vel-

vet seeds in cities around the world. A little while later, voila! Here we are, poised to take the underground scene for our own.

Let's start with the basics. See, Velvet is a worldwide organization which exists off the public map and under Mother's nose. You may have heard about terrorists and vigilantes, seeking to poison the masses with rock music and toxic bombs. Well, those stories are about us! Except for the bombs, mostly. We really are organized, though, and we really are out there. The rumors are true as far as all that goes.

What do we really do? Well, we do lots o' things. The primary mission is to aid and abet musicians in their efforts, free of charge. Mostly, we stage (or help stage) rock shows. We run security, get the word out, organize escorts for illegal instrument shipments, and generally keep an eye out for Mommy when rocking is afoot. All this work makes the concert experience bigger, better, more frequent, and less likely to cost you your looks, if you get my meaning. Our other goal is to show the ignorant masses that music isn't as bad as they've been told. It's not easy, 'cause wherever we go, the Ministry's propaganda has been there first. If we keep at it, though, we'll undo what the world's done to music, bit by bit. People who might never have the balls to listen will come out and see what the fuss is about, and it'll grow from frantic underground parties to a worldwide revolution.

The way we see it, if we can get the system to work without help from the Mob – really make it work big time, I mean, not just scale it back to pirate radio and gigs in dirty dives – we'll be on our way to separating musicians from the real criminals out there. That's step one, in Velvet's opinion.

Which brings me to another Velvet goal – to give the Ministry of Music trouble every chance we get! We've already done serious damage to their degree of control. That's why the Big Stomp was called in the first place (not that they'd ever admit there was a single group behind the whole thing!). They've seen what we can do.

We've done damage to them on the inside, through the hackers and tinkers we've got out there, doing real guerrilla stuff. We scramble transmissions, send out false alarms, listen in on their airwaves – I know that that ain't allowed – whatever we can do to get one up on their daily routines, we'll do it. Those are not our finest hours, acting like vandals and spies, but we've got to be one step ahead of them all the time, or we're dead meat.

A few hubs have already gone down to raids, you know, but we've got that under wraps. They think we're a lot fewer and further between than we really are, owing in no small part to the cell structure of the organization.

Organization

See, in each city, there's a central group of active people, forming a central nerve of all local Velvet-related activity. We call these hubs. Around each hub, throughout Velvet-occupied cities, there's actual groups called satellites. Each of these satellites operates more or less

The Granger Society

Just as ICCC controls more than just music, Velvet isn't the only resistance movement afoot. The largest of such groups is the Granger Society for Literary Preservation (casually referred to as the Grangers). Where Velvet struggles for the future of music, the Grangers fight to protect the written word.

The Granger Society was one of the first real anti-Ministry resistance groups. Founded by one Edmund Granger in 2061 (shortly after the Ministry of Literature first began destroying books en masse), it ranks grew from a handful of people to hundreds overnight. Mr. Granger lived (and died) a quiet pacifist, concerned only with preserving great literary works for all time; sadly, the successors to his command had different ideas.

The Granger Society is now considered a terrorist organization by the general public, and for once, the public is quite right. They still protect books, of course, but it's now an entirely different sort of protection. The Grangers attempt to draw attention to their cause in any way possible, including threats of violence and destruction – threats which they often fulfill!

Compared to literature, music and visual art are of little importance to the average

independently, in practice, although they all communicate with each other through their respective hubs.

The trick is, if one satellite goes down, the hub spreads the news and the other satellites know to lay low or scatter for a while. The city thinks they've fixed a problem, when all they've really done is be a bit of a pain. Sometimes kids get killed, and man, that's the worst. But in a week or two, whatever they deal us, we're back on our feet.

Satellite Operations

Each Velvet-occupied city has five or six satellites at any given time. Each satellite, working out of some secret headquarters, focuses on a neighborhood or group of neighborhoods, and helps the scene out where it lives. When one satellite needs help, another nearby group is sometimes called in (through the hub) to lend a hand. satellites are in charge of their own publications, pirate stations, bulletin boards, and even some special Velvet-maintained venues. Through a city's hub, Satellites share resources and information, and watch each other's backs.

Think of the hub as the roof of a house, and the satellites as the walls. The satellites hold the cell up, and the cell keeps the satellites in working order. With an organization like us on the job, bands from one city are becoming known all around the world. Radio pirates, bulletin boards, and old-fashioned 'zines are all under our umbrella. The idea is, if we can out-propaganda Mother, even only among the young, we'll have a whole generation on our team.

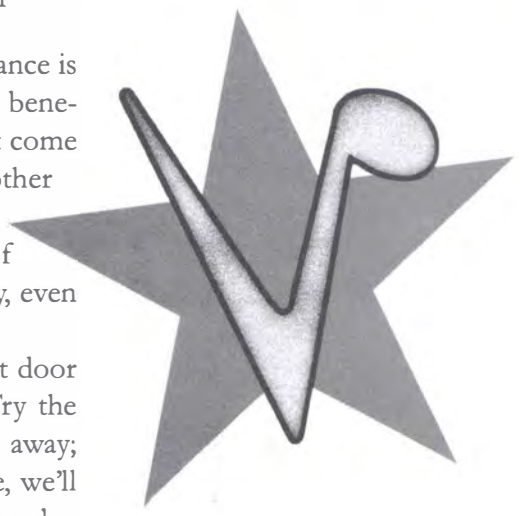
Hub Operations

Velvet's main hubs are the big targets, and we know it. Unlike satellites, hubs don't have a central brick-and-mortar location – each hub is scattered across the backpacks and briefcases of its members, who meet in different locations every time and communicate as quietly and cryptically as necessary. Even the satellites don't know where each other's headquarters are – everyone has to communicate through the Hub. It would be almost impossible for a local office of the Ministry to stop the hub from doing its job, too, even if it knew there was a hub to stop. It'd be like shooting a cloud to death, get it?

Working with your friendly neighborhood underground resistance is easy as pie, even if you're not a member. Your band has already benefited from us, whether you knew it or not. Crowds this big don't come through the Mob's help alone! Your gigs, and the gigs of many other groups, have been advertised and even attended by us for months now. And your roadie, Rav Pattar? Yep, old friend of mine, believe it or not. We roadies all know each other eventually, even before Velvet came along!

Ah, here we are, the HQ. See that purple star painted by that door over? That's how you'll know a safe house when you see it. Try the doors nearby, and don't worry if you don't get an answer right away; we're as careful as possible about unwanted company. Of course, we'll not be going in there until you're good an' signed up, you understand.

Granger. Similarly, members condescendingly view other resistance groups as younger, less purposeful compatriots (with the exception of the Blue Army, whom they hold relatively highly). However "misguided" a rocker might seem to the Granger Society, any enemy of the Ministries is a friend of theirs, and will be embraced as such. Be warned, though – while Grangers can make very powerful friends, spending too much time in the company of these madmen can get a rocker injured, arrested, or killed.



Ah, a vending machine. All this talking's dried me out. Want a drink? The White Heat at this machine is nice and cold… Water? Heh, sure, whatever floats your kidney.

The Starchildren

Of all the rockers within our glorious cause, you'll find a few that stick out like blisters on a bassist's finger. They're the latest thing, sort of a new wave of super-rockers. We all call them Stars, but I've overheard the proper term for these guys is "Starchildren."

Yeah, it's bloody cheesy, but somehow it just fits, y' know?

Anyway, if there's a ruckus these days, chances are one of these Starkids is in the middle of it. The romantics among us say you can tell a real Starchild from the feeling you get watching 'em play, but if you ask me, the only thing that really separates a Starchild from any other rocker is the drop-dead rock-star look. Being the centers of attention they are, it seems like all Starchildren like to doll up quite a bit, not unlike you.

Ha! Yeah, I've heard that rubbish, too. Some people will buy into anything. Let the bloody Looneybird Institute say what they want; if these guys were aliens, I think we of all people would know!

Anyway, the Starchildren are really out there, and kids pick up on it. This Starchild trend is the best thing that ever happened to music, if you ask me. They're into all sorts of rock, too; even hardcore bands are getting in on the space-rocker thing these days. You know Jackie Moon, of the Splattergirls? Yeah, he's their new lead singer, and he's a Starchild through and through if you ask me. Ozzy's tits, man, Moon can play a crowd like nobody's business! That's the thing about these Starchild guys. You just can't be one unless you've got a real way with people, it seems. The only thing Starchildren change more than their makeup is the minds of people around them.

Not that I'm complainin'. I got to date one for a while, you know! Starchild girls are a knockout, I tell you. At least, I think she was a girl…

Blackholes

Something to look out for, while we're on the subject, are "Blackholes" – that's what I'm told they're called, anyway. It seems there's Starchildren-like agents working for the Ministry itself. I'm not sure what their agenda is, hiring or training agents to be like that, but Blackholes know all of the sexy mind-tricks our Starchildren do, and they do them just as well. I figure they're hiring our own stars somehow, maybe brainwashing 'em, but who knows? Just don't trust any pretty face you meet. Even if they're as pretty as you are, kid!

The Blue Army

The wily ways of the Ministry aren't our only worries these days, though. Take the Blues, for instance. No, not those blues; the Blue Army's what I'm talking about.

See, a while back, there was a satellite called the Blue Army; maybe you've heard the name before. Now, they just weren't satisfied with the pace at which Velvet did its thing. They saw for themselves the fact that we could do some big stuff to piss the Ministry off, and they started to crave social change of a differ-

ent sort altogether. These bad boys, acting through us, started doing more than just social work. We're talking about breaking into Ministry offices, threatening agents, even the occasional car bomb! The Blue Army went too far, in our eyes, and they got kicked out faster than a communist in a country bar. Killing people was only going to make saving the world harder, you understand. Besides, the last thing we needed at that stage was a whole lot of bad publicity!

These guys decided they'd show us a thing or to, and they started their own little resistance. They hooked up with those Granger nutjobs, who were already quite good at the terrorist business, and the Blue Army stopped being a Velvet satellite and became their own little resistance group.

Those stories you've heard about kidnappings, gas attacks, stuff like that? Not Velvet's work, let me assure you. The Ministry loves the Blue Army for that, I think. Anytime the Blues do something' foul, it's all over the news, and they get to blame all rock music for the crime. To hear them tell it, Velvet's just a codename or sub-faction within the Blue Army. And that's only when they even mention us; I get the impression the Ministry doesn't want people to know that Velvet's even out there. It's even been suggested that the Blues get paid to tip off press contacts just before high-profile "incidents," which really wouldn't surprise me in the least. The media these days is rubbish.

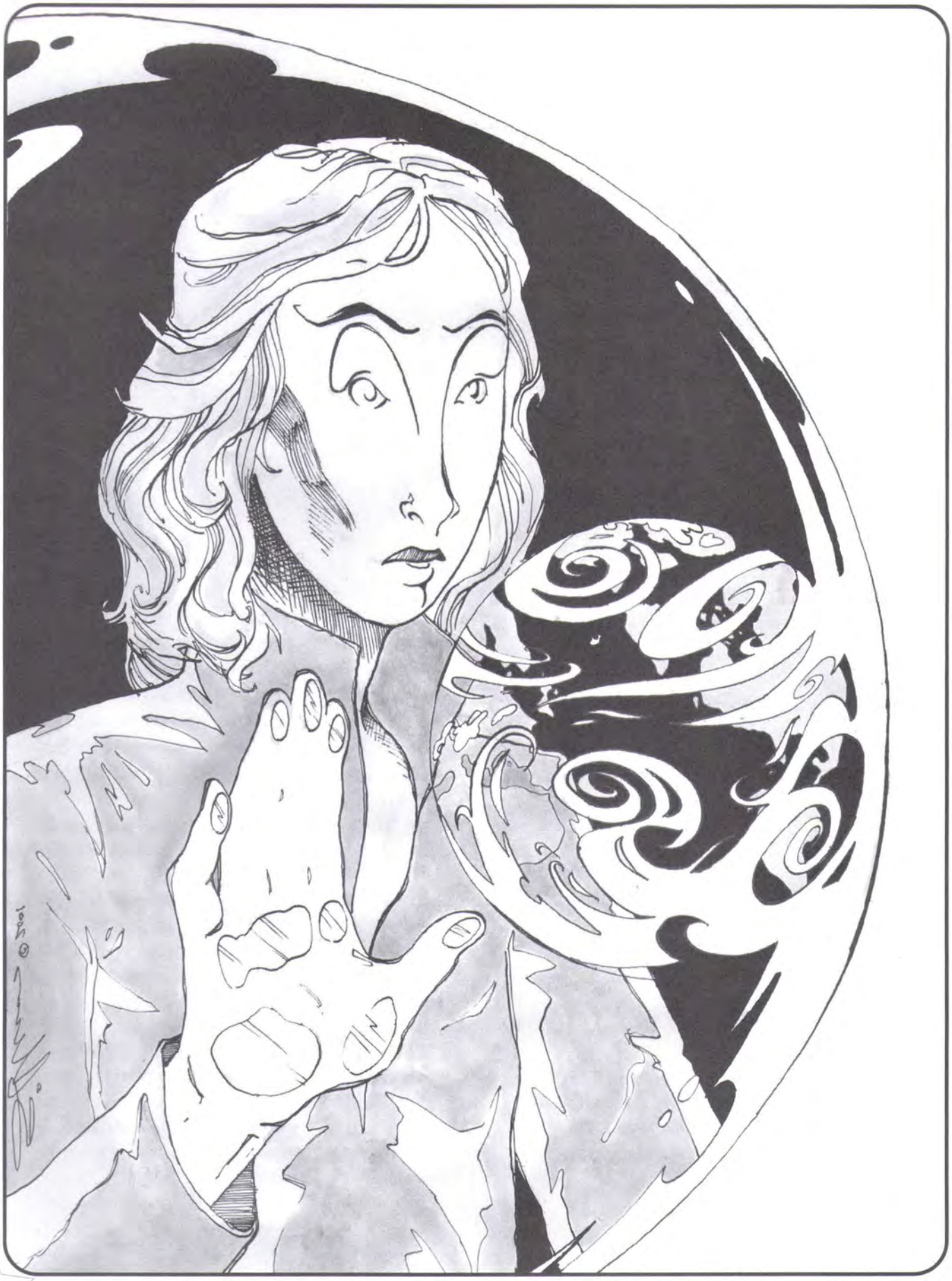
Blast, there goes my watch. Look, I'd love to talk more, but I've got another gig to help out with in an hour. Here's my card; it's a guitar pick. Clever, eh? Got my number on it, right there. Call me tomorrow, and we'll see about getting you and your mates on our side, eh?

Be seeing you, kid.

[End of file.]

[Summary – On June 6th, 2074, information obtained by Agent XXXXXXX from citizen Vanes and his May cohorts was used to retrieve ministerial warrants for the arrest and trial of no less than eighteen "Velvet" conspirators, as well as seven unlicensed musicians and two suspected music den operators. This action drew to a close Agent XXXXXXX's field operations, and were most useful in dismantling New York Starship, as well as two neighboring Velvet satellites. A more detailed summary may be found in Op. C. Record #2270.]

[In the months following the previously recorded surveillance exercise (see file 73-VH-0809), Agent XXXXXXX gradually achieved an unanticipated level of success through his undercover "shadow" band, which actually called itself XXXX XXXXX XXX (for further information on the Ministry's infamous "Shadow Band" project, see Op. C. Records #2269). Blending genuine talent with what was perceived as razor-sharp political wit, XXXX XXXXX XXX were the toast of the coast for a month or so, up until their cover was compromised at the Pyramid Lake Rock Festival.]



Chapter Four:
2000 Light Years From Home

(The following brief article is an excerpt from the October 2078 issue of Glammer (an underground 'zine which, after the Ministerial Dissolution, emerged as one of the leading mainstream music magazines). The article is an interview with noted rock revolutionary Stainless Pakistan, written only months after the Starchildren "came out" before the public at large. It was published during a period of intense public curiosity concerning the mysterious Starchildren, as well as the formerly-underground music scene in general.)

Tell me about your first memory, Stainless.

First memory… you mean, back on the ship?

Sure, if that's when it was.

Right. That would be of Gilly, telling me about what Earth would be like. The younger ones-

Who's Gilly?

I was getting to that, love. Gilly was one of my parents; Vash was the other. We didn't usually call our parents "mum" or "dad," because we didn't really distinguish between the sexes. So they were just "parents" to us, and we called them by their real names. But as we got closer to Earth, Gilly and Vash wanted me to call them "mother" and "father" more often, because they wanted to be as much like you Earthlings as possible.

So you called Gilly your mom, and Vash your dad?

Yeah, most of the time. Sometimes I'd get mixed up and call them the opposite, and they wouldn't even notice. It's little things like that which were the hardest part about adapting to Earth. Most of the details made sense to us, but the things that we had no call for at home were tough. Sex and food were the stickiest concepts. They were just so alien to us. So, sometimes Gilly was Mum, and sometimes she was Dad. I thought that winging it like that would be good enough to let me blend in.

But if you didn't know what sex was like, where did the children come from?

We didn't know what Earthling sex was like, love. We had our own kind, but that wasn't how we made children. Sex was just for fun, and for getting to know people. And it certainly didn't have any weird side effects like pregnancy. Our reproduction is perfectly intentional, so we never have any of what Earthlings call "accidents."

Sounds wonderful. So how do people like you get pregnant, if not by sex?

[Smiling] I thought we were talking about my first memory!

We've time to get back to that later. Let's talk about babies, now. Could you maybe get a human woman pregnant?

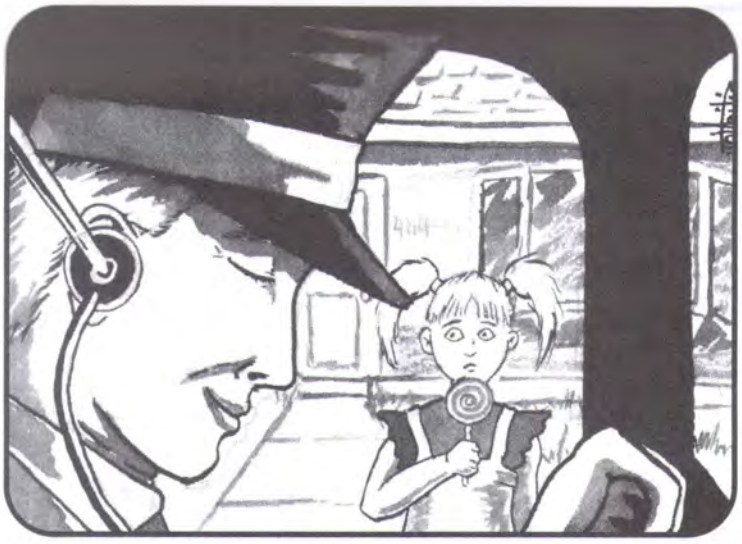
No. We're just not the same thing, y'know. Between ourselves, we have, ah, spores, you might call them. Like those puffy seeds that come off a dandelion, but they don't fly as far. They just sort of, you know, shoot out into the air and drift to the ground.

[Giggling] I'm sorry – they shoot? Shoot out of what?

You've your mind in the gutter, darling. Usually, they come out of one's mouth, though some could do it differently, if they were really creative. One of us breathes them out, and another just steps into the shower, breathing in as much as she can. The one that breathes them in, she's the one that carries the kid.

The mother?

You could say that. Any one of us can carry a child. Like I said, we had no concept of gender, until we came here. It didn't seem to matter much, at the time. And usually it still doesn't. So anyone could



choose to be the one who gets "pregnant;" it's only a question of who wants to be weighed down a bit for the next two months.

It was only two months? That short?

Why, does it take Earthling women longer?

Nine, usually.

Bloody hell. Who would want to carry around an extra ten pounds for that long?

Ten Pounds?

Er. Do I even want to know why that surprises you?

Never mind. Enough about that. I've only one more question about children, then.

Shoot.

Can I see them? Your spores, I mean. You can make them any time, right?

I can, but it's terribly tiring. I doubt I'd be up to it tonight; this last show was a burner. Perhaps another time.

What do they look like?

It's super lovely, like… well, a shimmering cloud of tiny reflective bits, in different colors, all drifting to the ground.

Like glitter?

Yes, I suppose so. I never quite thought of it that way. I wonder why I never thought of that while I was onstage! The crowd would've loved it.

So, we were talking about your first memories. From the ship.

Before you got on that wonderful sex tangent, yes. Got enough filthy details for now?

Yes. For now.

So, yes, my first memories were of Gilly teaching me what Earth would be like. I learned about history. Elvis, the Stones, the Beatles, you know., the basics. She told me about how Earth has different places, like America, England, Ireland and Mexico, and how the Earthlings from each of these places were a little different from the others. That was fascinating to us, you know. We're all different from each other, of course, but that was our own choice, not just based on where we were born. But Earthlings: they looked and spoke differently, depending on where they came from. That would be how we'd blend in, she said. No worries, right? We'd just say we were from a different side of the Ocean, like Vietnam or Russia, and that's why we looked different. That didn't quite work out, though, you know. We found out that Earthlings have a lot more in common with each other than we had thought.

The strange part is that, while they taught me what Earth was going to be like almost every day, they only told me very little about where we came from. We don't know much more about our old planet than you, really.

That sounds awful, to not know where you came from.

I didn't really consider it awful at the time. I knew where I came from; I was born on the ship. I suppose that, since my generation was the one that was expected to make it to Earth, the most important thing was that we knew about our new home. We were the end result of an idea that almost two whole generations put their lives into. Obviously, we thought we were going to a better place or it never would've happened, right? Of course, you know…

Of course I know what?

Never mind. Next question, please.

You were going to say something there. I know it. This is for posterity, love; of course I know what?

Of course, you know we were wrong. We came here and the whole stupid planet was gone. It wasn't anything like we were told it would be. We spent lifetimes getting here because of your music, your lives, your people, and you just cocked it all up, didn't you? Do you even know what you had going back then? How could you just walk away from all that? I guess Earth just woke up one afternoon and decided to stop singing, stop having any sort of fun and start working all their lives, start fighting wars and putting people in prisons for enjoying themselves, is that it?

I don't think it happened like that. I mean, we had wars and prisons and stuff then as well, I think. It was more than a hundred years ago, you know.

So what? I thought you Earthlets lived forever, unless you were shot or something.

Forever? Hardly. Usually only about seventy years, I wouldn't call that forever.

Well, its a terribly long time to us, let me tell you. The oldest of us made it to forty, I think. Look at me; I'd only be a kid by your standards, and most of us kids who landed are dead by now, even the ones who survived the Humanity Campaign. We grow up much faster, too. Most of us were four or five when we landed, back in '71, and we weren't exactly eating diapers by that point!

I think I get you. So, when you landed; what was that like, exactly?

Oh, it was exciting. We were all on our own for the entire operation; our parents were gone by then, when the arrival bells went off. We'd just passed Jupiter by that point, and I'd been a bundle of nerves all week. It was all finally happening.

Did you know what to really expect, by that point?

No, we didn't learn the truth about Earth until we were just outside your door. The plan was for each of our landing pods to hang about in orbit for a day or two, monitoring communications and such, to figure out the most tactful places to land. That's about when our hearts broke.

Didn't you get any revealing signals from Earth while you were back home, on the ship? To better prepare you for what lay ahead?

It's funny, you know, we couldn't have if we wanted to. After our parents had gone, all the technical stuff on the ship ran automatically; we didn't even control the landers ourselves until just before we'd reached Earth's immediate area. I guess it simply didn't occur to our parents to have us listen in before that. It's a good thing, too, 'cause if we had, some of us might have decided to stay back on the ship.

How did you manage to land unnoticed?

I don't believe we did! Although we wound up trying to make a quiet entrance, it was never part of the original plan; our arrival was supposed to be a big surprise, but it was also originally designed to be a little dramatic. I'm told people saw shooting stars on the day we arrived, all over the world, and even then some people were worried we were missiles or something. Like everyone else, I picked some dark spot of the Earth to land, somewhere I suspected there weren't any people around. I was frightfully scared of being attacked by unruly natives!

What about the pod, where did you hide it?

I can't speak for the others, but I didn't hide my lander at all, beyond coming down in the middle of nowhere. I did go back

to it a week or so later, to retrieve some rather valuable guitar picks, and it had turned all brown and crumbly…

You mean, it had rusted.

Sure, rusted. It was just a useless mess of rusted stuff, wires and silk. And about a month after that, it just looked like rubbish, which blended in quite well with those particular woods. That was a little sad when the lander fell apart, but it was a relief, too.

I used to see articles in the silly papers about someone finding an intact lander, and that worried us a lot, but it seems no one took it seriously. Oh, and some little sneak had stolen my guitar picks!

I'm sorry. Were they anything special, the picks?

Heh! Whoever took them sure found out, I'll tell you that much. I only hope he used them properly.

So, those first few weeks; tell me about your experiences then.

Well, it was tough. I understood English and a bit of German, but a lot of terms were totally unfamiliar. Our vocabulary was a century old, you know! How was I supposed to know what "pillits" or "condoms" were? I found out just about everything the hard way, and it took some time to find a place where I could settle down, where people hadn't already seen me acting like I was from outer space. There were other difficulties, too. I was broke, of course; I found a place where they let people live for free, which was a bit unpleasant, until I'd hooked up with a band and made enough scratch to rent a tiny pad. From what I saw, I'm lucky we don't need showers, because it seems to me that, for humans, the main advantage of getting a job is being able to take regular showers and wash your clothes!

That settles one rumor! You really don't need to bathe, eh?

Well, if we get dirty, I suppose we do. But we sure don't get all smelly, like you. No offense!

None taken! This is fantastic. So, what other differences are there, that you've noticed, in the physical sense?

Where should I start? You guys are stronger, harder, and often better at dancing. That aside, we're not that different from you, when it comes down to it; humans and Starchildren all breathe and eat and drink and smoke. It's the little differences that seem to creep us out, though. We don't eat solid food, for starters. I've never chewed anything but bubblegum in all my life. I learned early on to subsist mostly on milkshakes, which is all I need, once a day. I found an ice cream parlor that would put broccoli and bananas in my drink, if I brought them, but once they closed it was back to strawberry and pineapple. We don't do that whole toilet thing, either; we just kind of sweat things out. Bathrooms still freak me out, to be honest. And Indian food, oh, I really should have been warned about Indian food…

You sweat, but you don't shower?

Well, why would we? Our sweat smells quite wonderful, rather like your flowers here.

I… see.

The sleep thing is funny, too. We don't sleep much at all, compared to humans; about four hours is all I can manage before waking up. It seems like people spend half their lives asleep here, which is a horrible waste, if you ask me. Some pills would take care of that. You humans certainly can put away the pills.

Ah, yes. Let's talk about your experiences with drugs!

Oh, dear. Well, it's become rather obvious by this point that drugs here are quite different than the drugs we had back home. When I was growing up, on the ship, we had plenty of drugs, all sorts. None of it was addictive, none of it killed us. Let me tell you, the drugs here on Earth are something else entirely, and a lot of my fellow outsiders found this out the hard way.

Even we get addicted to certain drugs, you know.

Yes, I know. But compared to us, you're like oxen, you can take so much more abuse than we can. I'm still recovering from some of the stuff I did before the Revolution! And then there's Machine, filthy stuff, which many of us believe was a plot of some sort on the Institute's part. They certainly had the know-how to make designer drugs, and after the Humanity, we all know they wanted to wipe us out.

About the Humanity Campaign; what did you do, during that time?

I laid low, mostly. We all did. My name wasn't on that list, thankfully, but a lot of my friends' names were. I did what I could, and Velvet did what it could, but that witch-hunt was everywhere. The Institute was just too big, by that point. Too many people. You have to take the good with the bad, though, and the chaos following our "coming out" did spark the real revolution, after all. Still, such a loss… That whole extermination idea was pure Earthling, if you ask me. We never would have pulled something as horrible as that. Kind of ironic, calling it the Humanity Campaign, I guess.

What about the rumors of Starchildren allegedly helping the Institute identify targets, or working within the Ministry before it dissolved?

I can't say. Some of us hold that the Blackholes hooked up with Mother, that they were plotting against us all along, but that's all rumors.

Blackholes?

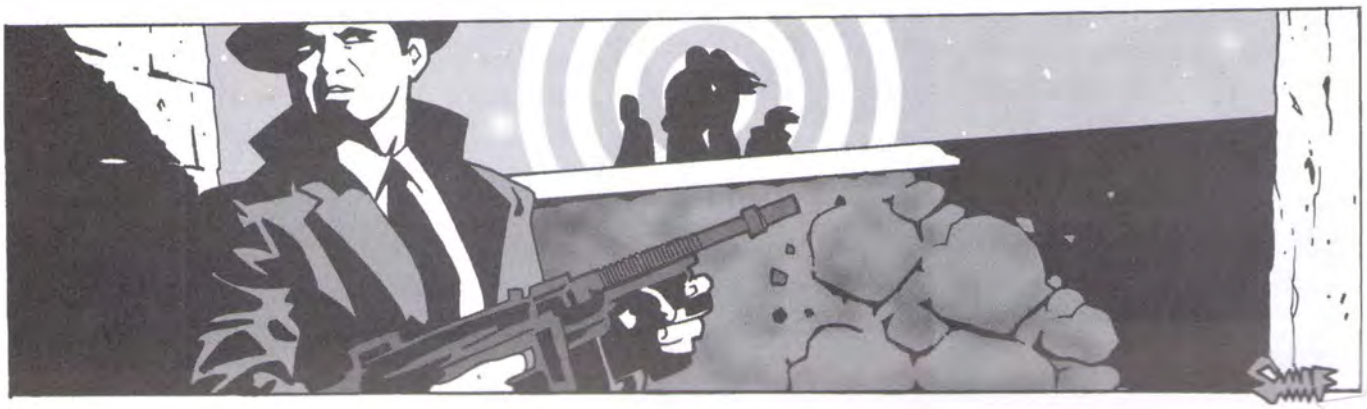
That's our word for them. See, back on the ship, there was a small group of kids who were in this nasty little clique, apart from the rest of us. I never got the whole story, but some of our parents had had some sort of disagreement before we were born, and they sort of split up into two groups. The other side no longer spoke to our parents, and their kids weren't allowed to play with us or anything. We called them Blackholes, and I guess they called us all sorts of names.

Do you really think these Blackholes would have sided with the Ministry of Music? That's quite an accusation, there.

I don't know. Nobody knows, really. But if there were bad Starchildren, it would likely have been them. I mean, the Blackhole kids were hush-hush, they never talked to us, never sat at the same tables as us, or slept in our beds. My parents never did tell me what their deal was.

Time for one last question: If you could travel back in time to 2073, what advice would you have given yourself?

Oh, that's a silly question. Let me think… I'd say never lose faith in the future, don't worry about the past, and be careful who you trust. Oh, and please, please cut back on the vodka milkshakes!



The following is another excerpt from the book The Velvet Generation: Rock & Roll in 2073 (Diamond Tooth Press, 2091) by Deirdre Podulka-Casablancas, music historian and journalist for New York Rock. Used with permission.

Enter the Starchildren
Shining tall, the bright new boys
Have come to make the kids their toys
They've made our dirty star their own
So drop 'em, dears, and get along
-Dazey Zeru, "Drop 'Em"

Beautiful, disturbing, weird and seductive, the Starchildren spun the world around and gave it a big, minty kiss on the lips. At once, the world both pushed away and eagerly dropped trou, and in the confusion that followed, Velvet grew into something more, and the Velvet Generation was born.

Ah, the Starchildren! Our rock stars, our mentors, our wet dreams, our beacons of musical hope. You couldn't meet one without feeling a bit changed, and you couldn't see one play onstage without falling in love. These strangers started popping up in the scene here and there, and many of us started bands after a single glimpse of their subtle magic.

Of course, back then, no one had the slightest idea about who they really were, or where they were really from…

Radio Free Cosmos

Over a century ago, around 1972, certain radio and television emissions from Earth fell upon a distant world, billions of light years away. We still don't know how these signals traversed such a distance so quickly – they received our broadcasts just a few years after we sent them out – but traverse they did. The Starchildren's ancestors were the inhabitants of that distant world, and although the transmissions only lasted for five short years, what they saw and heard during that time changed them forever.

Some say our music simply made them happier than they'd ever been, having never created music themselves; others say that such proof of extraterrestrial life was a societal catalyst, and ushered in a new age of awareness among them. Whatever the story, they grew to love all things human, being most of all enamored by our crazy rock & roll music.

Every aspect of their lives changed, bit-by-bit, until music was quite literally a religious experience to them. They created their own instruments, spoke and sang in human tongues, and even changed their bodies to resemble ours, all with recordings of our television signals as their guide. All this came to a head when technology caught up enough to allow for the ultimate expression of Earth-love: a glorious pilgrimage to the galactic birthplace of rock & roll.

Eager to meet us and show us what they had learned, hundreds of these beings boarded a great starship, and prepared for a fifty-year journey – longer than their average lifespans. Their children grew aboard this ship, dreaming of the glorious world that sang so sweetly to their ancestors and anxiously awaiting the great arrival to come. This second, space-born generation called itself – that's right – the Starchildren.

With all these expectations, all these beautiful stories and dreams, try and imagine how the Starchildren felt when they arrived at the Earth we know. Just try for a moment, and put yourselves in their shoes. Got that feeling in your head? Good. It was worse.

The Arrival

Once the starship was near Earth (not too near, however, seeing as how we still haven't found the thing), the Starchildren left their cosmic home in small one-man craft and shot themselves at our world. Before landing, they checked us out from a distance, listening to our airwaves and surveying our cities.

This was their great moment of heartbreak. Earth was not as it should have been! Our music was gone, our people unhappy, our world less than beautiful. Robbed of their only purpose in life, you'd think they would have just given up – but they didn't. As we would all find out eventually, it takes more than that to keep a Starchild's spirit down.

Optimism isn't stupidity, mind you, and the Starchildren decided against the big, showy entrance they'd originally had planned. They landed quietly in the wilderness, packed up their instruments and set off into the cities. Their beloved Earth needed to be repaired, and they were out to help us the only way they knew how.

They were out to Rock!

Anatomy of a Starchild

Starchildren look, sound, think and feel human. Their alien ancestors were masters at crafting flesh, and had plenty of human footage to draw from. Through a combination of the wonders of alien science and their strange shape-shifting talents, the Starchildren managed to walk hidden among us for several years.

This resemblance to us is only skin deep – or just a bit deeper. Their skin is usually pale, sometimes almost possessing a slight bluish tint, and most are very thin and fragile-looking. Seeing one in a group of humans, it almost looks as if they're standing in a different light. Of course, after living among us for a while, many chose to alter their appearance even further. Some Starchildren were unprepared for the diverse range of human appearances, and felt a different look would suit them better. Others simply altered their mass and height to look less unusual in a crowd, and to evade the authorities.

It was easier to spot one, in the early days – a Starchild might forget to give herself proper earlobes, or would fail to include little things like the right number of teeth. (Many didn't even know what we look liked naked – you can imagine the problems that caused!) Eventually, through "field research," they got all the basics down. Most also learned to make their blood run red – always a difficult lesson, that one.

I've asked many Starchildren what their species used to look like, before becoming "human." Believe it or not, they actually don't remember! Even before the pilgrimage to Earth, their race had apparently altered themselves to look like us. To make things more difficult (or easier, depending on how you look at it), the kids on the starship were told not to wonder about such things. It was held that too much knowledge about the old world would make them feel less human, and feeling less human might make blending in with us a little bit harder. And if there's one thing Starchildren have always needed help with, it's blending in.

Weird Powers

Starchildren may be weak and a bit naive, but they're far from powerless. Yes, I'm talking about the rumored "mysterious powers" your friends whisper about, and yes, they really do have them. There's a lot of silly stories going round, about what exactly they are capable of, so I'm going to set the record straight. To do this, I've gotten some help from a few musicians who owe me favors; I even got a few personal demonstrations!

Sound fun? Well, it was. Although feeling like you're falling in love is a lot more enjoyable when you don't already know it's just an alien parlor trick. Kinda creepy, really. But I digress!

All Starchildren have these abilities, to some extent. It comes totally naturally to them, just like vocalizing does for humans; they don't see it as anything special at all! The boundaries on their mental powers are a bit fuzzy, from what I gathered, and really limited more by what the Starchild can endure than anything else

As I mentioned briefly, Starchildren have amazing control over their bodies. They call this "flexing." It usually consists of simple, cosmetic things, like changing the length or color of one's hair, or rapidly growing one's fingernails. I'm even told that when a Starchild is good enough at it, she can even alter her muscle and bone structure, and heal serious wounds. Such drastic changes are not without danger, however, and flexing to such extreme degrees is very painful.

They can also do things to those around them, like change people's moods or perceptions. I personally don't like this power one bit (I'm still getting over that "mood-magic" demonstration, and so is my wife), but I'm assured that they don't use it without good reasons. Still, it's a little weird.

The Starchildren simply assumed we had such abilities when they arrived here, and thus were quite surprised when they found out otherwise. All the same, they truly don't see themselves as superior to us. One of my Starkid friends tells me he's amazed by some of our unique abilities, if you believe it!

For instance, what they consider to be our fabulous tolerance for drugs is the source of much alien jealousy. My friend also pointed out the stories of humans who can change their body temperatures or break concrete blocks with bare hands, not to mention the liquor we can drink straight. If you ask me, he's probably just read too many world's record books.

All the same, they still look up to us as much as we look up to them. Starchildren don't feel superior to us at all, in spite of their fancy powers and magnificent bottoms. I'm even told some have almost died from over-flexing, in vain attempts to become fully human! If that isn't flattery, I don't know what is.

The Alien Lifestyle

Adjusting to life on Earth has never been easy for Starchildren. While their parents did the best they could preparing them for life on our little blue planet, the little material they had to work with was insufficient in many respects. Century-old music and television programs are fine entertainment, but they make poor encyclopedias.

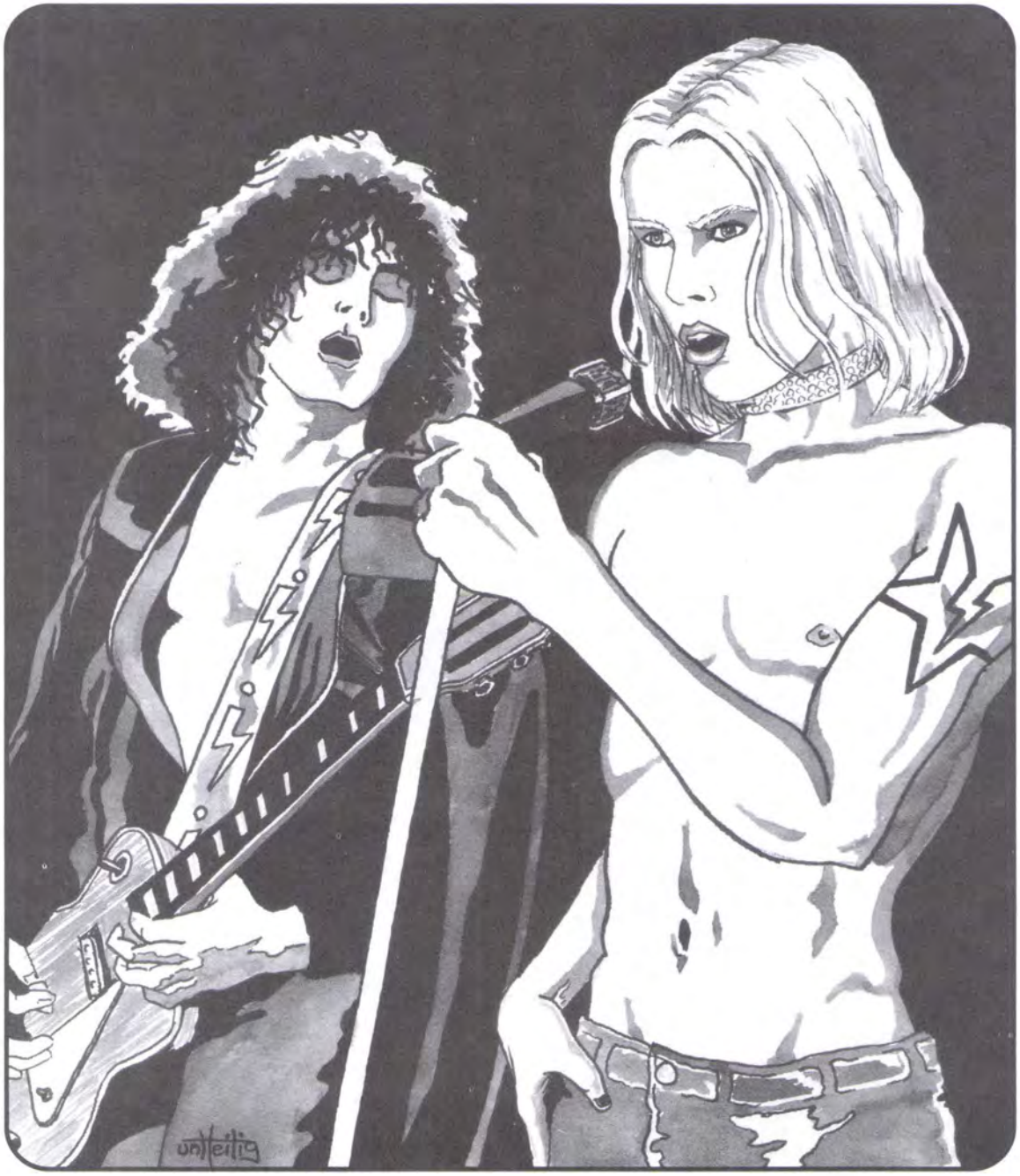
The most common misunderstandings between Starchildren and Earthlings arose from vocabulary. Slang, scientific terms, famous names, and the like had to be delicately gathered from newspapers and eavesdropping, in such a way as to avoid seeming too strange or out of place. To this day, Starchildren still use slang and expressions improperly. It's something which we now find endearing, but back in the 2070s, such behavior only gave rise to suspicion.

Sex, Aliens, and Rock & Roll

Naturally lacking any gender and bereft of monogamous tendencies, Starchildren are a puritan's worst nightmare. While it's true that homosexuality and transgenderism were as common as ever in the early 2070s, people were a bit less open about it than they are today. These risqué behaviors got Starchildren into all sorts of trouble when mingling among less tolerant people, of course, and many of them found it less troublesome to simply pick a gender and stick with it. Hell has no fury, they found, like an embarrassed human homophobe.

Fortunately, people on the rock scene then were as open-minded as they are now, and the mysterious sexual ambiguity Starchildren exuded was readily embraced there. Human musicians were even seen to adopt an androgynous look in imitation of their Starchild peers! Of course, not all forms of rock music meshed well with cross-dressing and face-painting. While Starchildren were all "classically trained" in glam-rock from birth, the new variety of rock music they found on Earth led many to stray into metal, punk, riot, and anything else they managed to find.

Curiously, to this day, no evidence of a Starchild country musician has ever been found…



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Chapter Five: Children of the Revolution

Roleplaying is all about character. During the game session, your character is your eyes and ears for experiencing the story, and your hands and feet for affecting the world. There are two parts to every good character. The first (and arguably, most important) is her background, personality, motivation and image. These are the "intangibles" of a character and players have free reign to make these up as they see fit. This chapter gives advice on how to develop these qualities, but there is no set method.

If this were a play, book or film, this would be all there is to a character. But because players take an active role creating a character requires more than that. To create the tangible aspects of your character, such as her skills and abilities, you will need to follow a certain method, which is described throughout this chapter.

Image Is Everything

Your character's personality is the most important quality she has. Her self-image (as well as the image she portrays to everyone else) will color everything she does. Think of how she speaks. Is she talkative or introverted, proper or vulgar, aloof or down-to-earth? Does she get along with new people, or is she cliquish, only relating to her friends and ignoring the rest of the world? Does she even have any real friends, or just casual acquaintances? Every question you can ask about your character reveals another facet of her personality.

Goodbye To Yesteryear

Just as every real person has a history, no character is a totally blank slate. Players should be sure that they have some background information before sitting down to figure out their character's numbers. It's not necessary to map out every single detail of a character's life, but the events and people most important to her should at least be covered. At the very least, a character's history should show clearly what Backgrounds she will take (see the next section).

The Character Sheet

At the end of this book, you'll find a copy of a sheet for recording the details of your character. Feel free to make as many copies of this sheet as you need in order to play. There are spaces on the sheet for all the statistics and ranks you will need during the game session. Everything on the sheet is labeled, but if you have any trouble, check the end of this chapter, where you'll find a sample character sheet filled out for Shird Oxendine, the character that we'll be creating in the sidebars as the chapter goes on.

Descent

The first choice you have to make concerning your character is whether she is human or an alien. Starchildren have very different lifestyles and attitudes than the Earthlings they live among–spending the first two-thirds of your life on a starship the size of a skyscraper can will that to you. In any case, players should decide this early in the process of developing their characters: Starchild or Earthling?

Starchild

Starchildren have had to adapt to life on Earth from scratch, and have had less than two years to do so. There is almost nothing that they take for

granted, even the "facts" they learned from Earthly broadcasts. This means not only that they tend to lack the skills that most Earthlings consider commonplace (such as driving and operating a computer), but also that they have a very skewed idea of what Earthling culture is like.

Since most of the players reading this are human, it can be hard to grasp the Starchild mindset. Imagine being raised by television. Not raised watching television, but brought up having the world you live in explained to you in terms of films, music and (most frightening of all) advertisements. Imagine knowing how to be sexy, without knowing exactly what sex is. Then imagine that you wake up one day and find that the world is the opposite of what you thought all along, and that you have no escape at all. Being an alien sounds a little less fun when you think about it that way.

Earthling

Earthlings are, at heart, just like they've always been. They created the mess that their alien companions stumbled into, but have learned to live with it. While player character Earthlings are most likely going to be unhappy with the current state of affairs, they either don't think they can ever change the world, or can't even imagine what life would be like after such a change. It takes a tremendous shock to motivate Earthlings, but a shock is exactly what's coming.

Backgrounds

After you know who and what your character is, and a bit about her past, you can start to figure out what exactly she's capable of. While every character is unique, most have certain experiences in common. This is where Backgrounds come into play, providing the link between the words and numbers that describe a character. Based on your character's history and personality, choose a number of Backgrounds from the list below. Earthling characters get four, while Starchildren only get three, because of the short time they've had to get used to life on this planet.

Background List

Badass

Badasses are the masters of evoking awe and fear from those around them. Where a Badass goes, people stop their conversations and turn to look. Badasses tend toward work as police, Ministry agents, bouncers and bodyguards. Of course, not every person who plays the bully is as dangerous as they seem; this Background doesn't cover any ability to fight or hurt people. Badasses also tend to be Scrappers, so they have some skill to back up their threats.

Skills:
Endure
Guts
Impress

Shird Oxendine: Example Character

Kim is sitting down to make her first character after reading through the setting portions of the book. All she knows is that she wants to play a cynical, practical Starchild (of course, she knows that a "practical" Starchild is a bit of an anomaly, but she's OK with this). The players have all agreed that their characters will be in a band together. Being a sarcastic one, her character calls himself "Shird Oxendine" to mock the rest of the group's absurd stage names.

Kim decides that a person with Shird's personality would make a good bassist and techie for the group. This gives her two of Shird's three Backgrounds: Guitarist and Technician. Kim wants Shird to blend in with humanity more than his fellow Starchildren, so she chooses Freelancer as his third Background, so he can get the Earthly skills that his brother and sister Starchildren usually lack.

Intimidate
Negotiate

Businessman

If profit is the single most popular religion on the planet, Businessmen are its priests. They are the ones who will buy and sell anything, if they think it'll fill their bank accounts. From stockbrokers, entrepreneurs and shopkeepers, to band managers, drug dealers and pimps, Businessmen are found throughout the social food chain.

Skills
Blend
Bureaucracy
Computer
Negotiate
Promote

Cop

It used to be that "a cop on every corner" was the unattainable dream of every crime-busting big city mayor. Today, having only one cop per corner seems like anarchy by comparison. This background covers not only actual cop characters, but Ministry officers and most private security agents as well. The skills listed here are the basic training that people get in order to be licensed in these fields.

Skills
Alertness
Bludgeon
Bureaucracy
Drive
Shoot

Dimmer

Dimmers are the great, unwashed masses of urban life, those on the verge of poverty and below. Dimmers learn early on that the only person that you can rely on is yourself, and that survival sometimes requires you to do things that are less-than-legal. Because of this, Dimmers tend to be extremely resourceful.

Skills
Break-In
Streetwise
Iron Stomach
Conceal
Sneak

Drummer

Onstage, it's the Drummer's beats that hold the performance together. Offstage is another story. Usually, the drummer is the most surly and belligerent member of a band. If a band ends up in a fight, it's usually the drummer who started it, and who will finish it. Of course, there are some even-tempered drummers out there, who usually resent the bad reputation their counterparts bring to the profession.

Option: Experienced Characters

If The Man wishes to have player characters that have "been around," he may wish to allow players to choose one extra Background for their characters. He may also increase their Attribute rankings by one card rank. The Man is encouraged to not allow players to talk him into this option (or any other option, for that matter). This is only meant for games in which the players are portraying real movers in Velvet, or bands on par with the greats, such as Samizdat, Megalicious or Activate the Love Machine!

Skills

Bludgeon
Endurance
Intimidate
Percussion
Repair (instrument)

Face

Faces are some of the nicest people you'll ever meet. At least, that's what they make you think. Faces are experts at getting on someone's good side, usually with the intent of charming their wallet out of their pocket, or them out of their pants. Con men, TV evangelists, hired escorts and telemarketers have a tendency toward this Background. But not every Face uses her skills for evil. Some actually are genuinely friendly, and just have likeable personalities.

Skills

Blend
Bluff
Impress
Persuade
Seduce

Freelancer

Most Backgrounds listed here are a specific "type" of person, all of which share similar experiences and skills. Freelancers are the exception to this rule. The only thing that two Freelancers have in common is that they don't fit in anywhere else. The skills a character gains from this Background aren't limited by any personality type or occupation. Rather, Freelancers learn from genuine experience. The downside to this is a lack of focus. Where most Backgrounds grant five skill ranks from a fixed list, Freelancers get three free skills, ranked 5, 7 and 9 (skill selections and free skills are explained in the next section).

Skills

3 free skills (ranked 5, 7, 9)

Frontman

A band's frontman works the crowd like the others work their instruments. They are the first face that comes to a fan's mind when she hears the name of the band. To most fans, the words "frontman" and "singer" mean the same thing. This isn't entirely wrong, but isn't entirely right, either. Some guitarists have made legendary names for themselves without ever speaking a word to an audience, and have singers backing them up, not the other way around. The infamous guitarist Nik Yowl manages to continue leading his band, Deadpool, even after being rendered permanently mute by a broken bottle-wielding madman in a brawl.

Skills

Compose
Fashion
Impress
Lyrics
Vocals

Guitarist

In over one hundred years, the only thing that hasn't changed about rock music is the necessity of the electric guitar (a fact that guitarists rarely let the

rest of the band forget). Next to singers, guitarists usually get the most recognition offstage. They also tend to be the most versatile members of the group, not only playing their instruments, but also singing and writing songs.

Skills
Compose
Impress
Guitar
Repair (instrument)
Vocals

Keyboardist

In most bands, the keyboards are relegated to a position secondary to lead guitar or bassist, but their potential is greater than that. A good enough keyboardist with a decent synthesizer really doesn't need the rest of the band; she can approximate almost any sound with the equipment at her fingertips. A number of Velvet Generation musicians do just that, going entirely solo and, in some cases, pretending to be entire bands. The famed keyboardist Isaac Pharaoh even goes so far as to hire models to mime playing instruments onstage and in publicity shots to keep up the image that his "band," Narcissus Agenda, is more than just one man.

Skills
Compose
Computer
Keyboards
Repair (electronics)
Vocals

Professional

Outlaw. Idol. Revolutionary. All of these titles are great, but few of them will put food on the table. Rock can save the world, but until then, it needs a day job. This Background is for all the working masses that moonlight in the underground. Unlike most Backgrounds, there are only three skills listed below. Professionals get these three skills, plus two other skills, which players are free to choose from the list. These extra skills have to be related to the character's profession; they aren't the same as the "free" skills you get from taking Flaws or the Freelancer Background.

Skills
Bureaucracy
Computer
Drive
(Plus two job-related skills)

Scrapper

Everyday life in 2073 is safer than it's ever been. Violence (and images of violence) has been removed from films, television, books, video games and newspapers. The average person hardly considers the

Fact-Finding in 2073

With the constant censorship and invasive eyes of the Ministries of Culture, it may seem like there is no future in the field of journalism. However, news media still exists. Working journalists are required to have a license, issued to them by the Ministry of Literature. Being a licensed journalist means that anything you publish through the accepted channels (television, print, Internet) can be traced back to you almost immediately. It also gives Ministry agents free access to any files you have on your home or work computers. For the majority of reporters out there, this isn't a problem, because they wouldn't dream of expressing any unfavorable ideas. But licensed journalists sympathetic to subversive groups such as Velvet have to be very careful what they say and where they say it, or their careers (and lives) may be in jeopardy.

School Rules

What happened to history? The answer, oddly enough, can be found in the public schools of any civilized nation.

The deception of young citizens of the world begins in early childhood, and is probably most notable in the area of world history. Having been subtly altered over time, history classes are more than a bit biased. The time before Culture Correction is painted as a time of unparalleled war, famine, and crime. Certain historic episodes (such as Prohibition) are ignored or altered, and entire cultures, achievements and major world events don't even make the cut.

This quiet revisionism is the sleepy legacy of the child psychologists (or "rude old bats") within the Ministry of Education. The last thing youngsters need, they say, are the tales of wanton bloodshed, mass rebellion and anarchy of mankind's savage past. Furthermore, modern educational doctrine suggests that students should be actively discouraged from pondering the past, and outright punished for questioning the present.

All schools, public or private, must conform to all programs and include all curriculum issued by the MoE. These programs include increased, non-competitive athletics programs and heavy trade-oriented class-

possibility of harming another directly. This aversion to danger is what causes the masses to support the Ministries in the first place. The mere implication that free expression could lead to violence was enough to make a majority of people decide that they didn't need real music or literature anymore.

But some people find this lifestyle terminally boring. They might think that freedom is worth a little danger, or they might actually enjoy the violence that comes with living outside the walls that protect the rest of society. Usually, these people learn to be violent themselves, whether for self-defense or for actively hurting others.

Skills
Bludgeon
Brawl
Dodge
Slash
Throw

Snoop

Private eyes, Mother's agents and underground journalists are everywhere in the dim world of the Velvet Generation. In a world where everyone has a secret, it's only natural that there are people who specialize in ferreting those secrets out and revealing them to the right people. Obviously, this Background goes well with Cop, but anyone who likes to find out hidden knowledge qualifies.

Skills
Alertness
Detect Lies
Investigate
Search
Sneak

Student

As always, Rock music and dangerous lifestyles find their strongest supporters among college students. As such, the underground crowd tends to be much more intelligent than the Ministry-created propaganda and smear campaigns would suggest. Student life affords characters just the right combination of intellectual stimulation and free time to make them the perfect revolutionaries.

Skills
Alertness
Bluff
Computer
Fashion
Knowledge (choose a specialty as the Student's major)

Technician

These are the Men In Black, making gigs happen and keeping the world turning...at least, in their minds. Gone are the days of the unappreciated roadie, driving tour buses and getting third choice of the

groupie pool. Velvet Generation musicians value their roadies, since a broken instrument can't be replaced easily, cheaply or quickly. Also, since roadies usually double as bodyguards, lookouts and getaway drivers, bands will definitely give the technician his due.

Beyond music, Technicians can be mechanics, engineers, hackers and inventors. Getting a handmade weapon or instrument from a skilled basement craftsman is a lot easier than haggling for one stolen from the local precinct house. Many Technicians in this line of work prefer to stay out of any direct "dirty work," but some jump in feet-first, just to prove that they're more than just a "contact."

Skills
Alertness
Computer
Drive
Knowledge
Repair

Skills

Skills are the everyday things that a character knows how to do, from dancing to negotiation to firing a gun. A character will have a card rank for every skill she knows. A high card rank means that the character is good with that skill, while a low one indicates that she isn't very well trained. Of course, no character will know how to do everything, so there will be a lot of skills left with no rating.

Choosing Skills

Most of a character's Skills will depend heavily on her Backgrounds, since everyday experience tends to shape what people can and can't do. Each Background gives a character a list of five skills she can take. For most Backgrounds, a character gets one skill at rank 9, two at rank 7 and two at rank 5. The exception to this rule is the Freelancer, who gets three free skills, at ranks 9, 7 and 5. Players can assign these ranks however they like among the skills listed in the character's Backgrounds. If a player doesn't want to take all of the listed skills, she can choose to spend some of these ranks on Edges (explained a bit further down).

Skill Descriptions

Alertness (Perception)

This skill is the ability to notice things that you aren't directly looking for (such as someone sneaking up on you in a dark room). Alertness doesn't cover analyzing something once you know it's there, though (that requires the Search skill). The Hide-and-Seek section of Chapter Six has details on how this skill is used.

Blend (Presence)

Characters with this skill are familiar with the nuances of social interactions, and can deal with people effortlessly and elegantly. Things

es (metal shop, for example). There are required courses detailing "responsible citizenship," and the arts, if included at all, are limited to woodwork and macaroni sculptures. The uniforms are ugly, the teachers are cruel, and the food is all rubbish. Simply put, if you're looking for a balanced, rewarding education, you've certainly picked the wrong decade!

Of course, those who knew the truth about history before all of this miseducation didn't simply die off. Some are working with the Grangers to preserve history. Others have tried to change the educational system from within, teaching unpopular truths to unsuspecting pupils, at the risk of expulsion and imprisonment. Most old folks, however, either aren't aware of the changing history books or just don't give a damn abut anything anymore.

Free Skills

Though most of a character's skill choices are limited by her Backgrounds, it is possible to break out of those restrictions. Characters can gain free skills by choosing the Freelancer Background or by taking Flaws (which we'll explain a bit further down).

Characters aren't limited by their Backgrounds when taking free skills; they can assign free ranks to any skill on the list. This is the only way for a Starchild to gain ranks in

Mojos, in fact, since those skills don't appear on the skill list for any Background.

If you feel that the Background system is too restrictive for you, feel free to take Freelancer four times. You'll definitely have all the freedom you want in choosing your skills, but the number of skills your character knows will be reduced dramatically.

Specializing

For players who aren't happy with the starting skill ranks, there is hope. Spending two equal skill ranks on the same skill raises the skill one extra level. Spending three raises it two levels, and so on. So, if a character has the Computer skill, and her player puts two ranks of 5 into it, the skill gets raised to 6. Putting an additional 5 into the skill raises it to 7.

The usual way this is done is when a player picks the same Background more than once, so she has another set of ranks to spend on the same list of skills. But skills can also be raised by spending ranks from two different Backgrounds, or from free skills (like the ones gained from Flaws or taking the Freelancer Background).

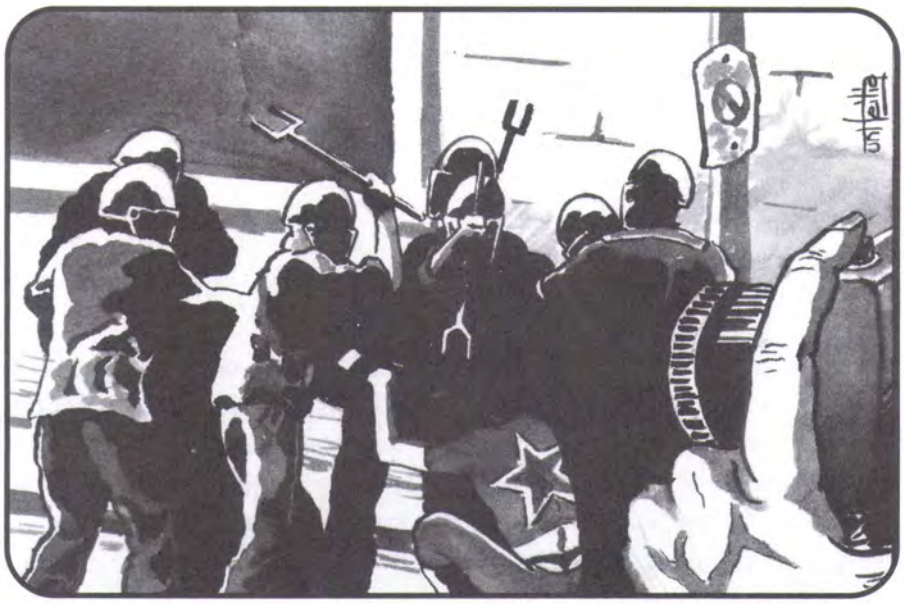
Shird Oxendine: Skills

After Kim has chosen Shird's Backgrounds, she has to get into the gritty details of

that normally stand in the way of communication are easily sidestepped with this skill. Without it, a character might relate well to people within her social class, but will be totally lost when out of her element. See the Socializing section of Chapter Six for the details on when and how to test for Blend.

Bludgeon (Agility)

Characters swinging any blunt object in a fight use this skill. Baseball bats, police truncheons and steel pipes are common bludgeoning weapons.



Bluff (Wit)

This skill is used when you try to stretch, bend or mutilate the truth. The Man may also require a Bluff test for lies of omission. Note that a high Bluff skill doesn't mean that people believe everything you say – only believable lies can be passed using this skill.

Brawl (Agility)

Brawl is the most common skill used in a fight, because it governs attacks with the fists, feet, forehead, or any other body part that can be used offensively. Some weapons also use Brawl, if they are used to simply augment a barehanded attack (like brass knuckles or heavy boots).

Break-In (Wit)

Not everything worth having can be obtained honestly. Characters with this skill can pick locks, escape handcuffs, and hotwire cars. In other words, they can use Break-In to get past any device meant to either keep them out or keep them in.

Bureaucracy (Wit)

Hardly anything gets done anymore without having to cut through red tape, wait in long lines, and get rubber-stamped by dozens of bored government or corporate agents. This skill lets characters maneuver through "The System" with the least amount of hassle possible. It's no

mistake that the higher-ups in every governmental organization have this skill at high levels – that's how they got there.

Computer (Wit)

This skill represents a close familiarity with the various uses of computing. Modern computers are user-friendly enough that a character can manage the basics without needing this skill. On the other hand, any terribly complicated task (such as programming) requires this skill.

Another use for the Computer skill (and an important one to most bands) is programming digital music with a synthesizer. Details can be found in the Performance section of Chapter Six.

Compose (Perception)

This skill covers the creation of original instrumental music. Characters in a band should have at least one member with this skill, or else they'll end up just playing other peoples' songs. Just remember, no cover band ever changed the world.

Conceal (Perception)

Characters with this skill are adept at hiding small objects in their clothing and on their bodies. For characters that carry around weapons, drugs and music recordings, this is a very useful skill to have. Details on using Conceal can be found in the Hide-and-Seek section of Chapter Six.

Detect Lies (Perception)

One of the rarest finds on the streets of 2073 is genuine honesty. If you want to make it in the underground world, you have to be able to tell when you're being lied to. This skill will help you do that. See the Socializing section of the Rules chapter for details on how to figure out when you've been had (or, hopefully, before you've been had).

Drive (Perception)

While many people drive cars every day, most of them simply cannot handle a vehicle in anything worse than heavy traffic. Characters with this skill can make tests when engaged in car chases, attempting stunt driving, or in extremely bad road conditions. Those without this skill simply crash in these situations.

Dodge (Speed)

Most peoples' gut reaction to an attack is to try and get out of the way. Having this skill just means that the character knows the best ways to do that. Dodge is used in fights when the character is on-guard and mobile, either to oppose the attacker in close combat, or to complicate a shot in ranged fights.

Endurance (Body)

This skill covers the ability of some characters to keep going under extreme stress. The Violence section of the rules chapter covers using this skill for sprinting, but The Man may also require a test whenever a character has to act while tired or hurt badly.

what exactly her character knows. Looking at the skill lists for Guitarist and Technician, she has some choices to make.

The Guitarist Background allows Shird to take Compose, Impress, Guitar, Repair (instrument) and Vocals, and she has the ranks 9, 7, 7, 5 and 5 to assign however she wants. Kim decides that she wants Shird to be a better technician than guitarist, so she puts the 9 into Repair and only a 7 into Guitar. Kim assigns Compose and Impress each a rank of 5, leaving her with one 7. Since Shird isn't the backup vocals type, she decides that she'd rather use that 7 to get an Edge later on, so Shird is left with little to no singing ability.

Being a Technician gives Shird access to Alertness, Computer, Drive, Knowledge and Repair. Again, she can choose to allocate one skill a rank of 9, two a rank of 7 and two a rank of 5. Shird already has a Repair skill of 9 from his Guitarist Background, but Kim thinks that's not good enough. So she spends her 9 rank on Repair again to increase Shird's skill to 10. Kim knows that the Starchildren haven't been on Earth long enough to become very good at operating human computers or cars, so she decides to assign her Computer and Drive skills ranks of 5 each. This leaves her two ranks of 7 and the Knowledge and Alertness skills. She wants

Shird to have both, so she uses both ranks (instead of holding them for Edges later on). The Knowledge skill requires a specialty, so Kim picks ancient Rock history, saying that Shird picked up a lot from his lessons on the ride to Earth.

So, this leaves Shird with the three free skills he gets from being a Freelancer. Kim can pick any three skills from the list and give them ranks of 9, 7 and 5. She knows right away that she wants Shird to take advantage of his Starchild heritage, so she immediately spends the 9 on Vibe. She also reasons that Shird's personality will have gotten him into a few fights, so she decides to give him a Dodge skill of 7 and a Brawl skill of 5.

Looking over her choices, Kim sees that just about every aspect of Shird's personality and history is covered in his skill list, so she records them all on the character sheet:

Alertness: 7
Brawl: 5
Compose: 5
Computer: 5
Dodge: 7
Drive: 5
Guitar: 7
Impress: 5
Knowledge (Rock history): 7
Repair (instrument): 10
Vibe: 9

Fashion (Perception)

The way a person dresses can have a huge impact on how others react to her. This skill lets a character use this to her advantage. Fashion can improve a character's results in social situations or a singer's performance at a show. See the Socializing and Performance sections of Chapter Six for the details.

First Aid (Perception)

From bandaging wounds to treating shock to pulling bullets, this skill allows a character to help the wounded. Player characters will likely find this most useful after fights, when their friends are down and in need of help. First Aid and Medicine are not the same skill. Medicine is a skill possessed mainly by doctors, who have a more complete understanding of bodily functions, and specialize in long-term care of the sick and wounded. See the Medical Attention section of Chapter Six for more details.

Flex (Appearance)

There's a reason that Starchildren look so good, and its name is Flex. This Mojo allows a Starchild to physically alter her body. A high enough level allows a character to alter her skin tone, hair color, height, weight, or gender. This skill is off-limits to Earthlings, who just don't have the innate abilities of their alien friends. The Mojo section of Chapter Six has a more in-depth description of Flex.

Guitar (Speed)

The electric guitar is the symbol for rock music just as rock music is now the symbol of revolution. This skill covers not only the revered six-string electric guitar, but also all related instruments, such as the bass, acoustic and classical guitar. See the Performance section of Chapter Six for the details on when to make tests of a character's guitar skill.

Guts (Will)

A character with Guts knows how to stand her ground in scary situations. The exact definition of a "scary situation" depends on the character. Some might have a fear of violence, and have to test guts before getting involved in a fight. Some might be afraid of police, large dogs, or a specific person, and will have to make a test when confronted with any of these things.

Impress (Appearance)

Your first impression is usually the only one you get, so be sure to make it good. Whether a character wants to look dangerous, sexy, or just plain cool, this is the skill to do it. The details are in the Socializing section of Chapter Six.

Iron Stomach (Body)

Only those with an Iron Stomach can withstand the rigors of the a true rock and roll lifestyle. Without this skill, a character's body will surely suffer from the effects of drugs, booze and fast food. Any time a character takes a dose of something potentially harmful, she will have

to test this skill to see how it affects her. See the Drugs section of Chapter Six for the full story.

Investigate (Wit)

Characters with this skill have a talent for drawing connections between seemingly unrelated things. Characters can test this skill if they fail to pick up on some vital detail or clue in the game. Of course, players should always try to figure things out for themselves before The Man allows them to use this skill.

Intimidate (Presence)

It's one thing to scare a person because you've got a gun pointed at their head. It's another thing entirely to send them running with nothing but a long, cold, hard stare. Using Intimidate is described under Socializing in Chapter Six.

Keyboards (Wit)

Characters with this skill know their way around any instrument with a piano-style keyboard. Of course, since it's difficult to hide a church organ or harpsichord in the backseat of your car on the way to a gig, most underground musicians use the skill to operate synthesizers. See the Performance section of Chapter Six for the system.

Knowledge (Perception)

This skill grants a character extensive familiarity with a single academic field. Characters with this skill know a lot of facts and theories on the subject, but won't necessarily have any practical experience. Below are some example specializations, but characters can specialize in any subject taught in major universities.

Specializations: Biology, Astronomy, History, Economics, Journalism, Pharmacology, etc.

Lyrics (Wit)

A good song is nothing without good lyrics, and a good band has to have good songs. Without catchy, meaningful lyrics, your band will end up playing recycled songs in low-end dives while the revolution keeps going on its own.

Medicine (Perception)

Unlike First Aid, Medicine can be used to treat long-term illnesses or injuries. Characters suffering from the lasting effects of wounds or drug mishaps may need the attention of someone with this skill. Obviously, just about every doctor has a good rank in Medicine, but the skill can also be found among nurses, drug chemists and hypochondriacs that spend too much time online.

Negotiate (Will)

Every day, people meet behind closed doors and make decisions that can affect thousands of unwitting individuals. The ones with the best ranks in Negotiate are the ones who usually get their way. If you band manages to get signed, you've got to be sure you're not getting screwed in your contract. To do that, you've either got to hire a manager or learn the fine art of hard-nosed dealmaking yourself.

Percussion (Body)

Banging on something to make noise is easy. Banging on something steadily enough so that the rest of the band has something to play by is something else. See the Performance section in Chapter Six for details.

Persuade (Presence)

While someone with Intimidate can force others to do what she says, a character with Persuade can make people *want* to do what she says. Test Persuade when you need a favor, or when you need to convince a bystander not to scream for the cops when he sees you unloading a drum kit on a lonely street.

Promote (Perception)

A favorite of band managers, dealers and advertising agencies, Promote is what a character uses when she needs to get the word out about an event, person or product. A band's success can be made or unmade by their manager's ability to Promote. The Man has the details of exactly how this happens in Chapter Seven.

Repair (Wit)

Characters with this skill can make broken things work, and working things better. Characters with this skill must choose a specialty, covering a type of device that they know how to build or fix.

Specializations: Instruments, Electronics, Guns, Cars, Appliances, etc.

Shoot (Perception)

Marksmanship has become something of a lost art ever since firearms were outlawed by virtually every industrialized nation on the planet. In 2073,

mostly only cops and Ministry agents know how to shoot straight. Of course, there are always those who get their hands on illegal weapons and make liberal use of this skill.

Streetwise (Wit)

Living on the street is like living on another planet. For some, it actually is living on another planet. Characters with this skill can scrounge for useful items, score drugs and other illicit goods. See the Scrounging and Equipment sections in Chapter Six for the details.

Search (Perception)

Search is used to actively examine details. A character can use Search to scan a room for a way out, frisk a person for weapons or hidden goods or decrypt coded messages. Often, Search attempts are foiled by the Conceal or Sneak skills, as the Hide-and-Seek section of Chapter Six covers.

Seduce (Appearance)

Even in 2073, underground culture stands on three legs: sex, drugs and Rock & Roll. This skill covers the only part of that trinity that's still legal. A character with Seduce is a master of turning casual conversation into a hypnotic mating ritual. She might do this out of an actual desire to sleep with a person, or because she just wants to get someone into a vulnerable position.

Sparkle (Appearance)

Not all the lightshows and effects that go on during a concert are the work of the backstage crew. At least, not if there's a Starchild with Sparkle involved. This skill covers a Starchild's ability to control and manipulate some forms of light (not just visible light, but also UV, infrared, radio waves, etc.). Since Sparkle is a Mojo, only a Starchild can learn this skill. Check out the Mojo section in Chapter Six to find out exactly what the character can do with this usual talent.

Slash (Agility):

Using any sort of edged or pointed weapon in combat is covered by this skill. Slash covers common knives, as well as more obscure weapons like machetes, axes and icepicks.

Sneak (Agility)

Sneaking into a closed store, past patrol cops, or out of your parents' house late at night isn't the easiest thing in the world. Characters with this skill are more likely to get away than your average person, and some even use it to make a living. See Hide-and-Seek in Chapter Six for the full system.

Throw (Agility)

Baseball players, riot cops and not-so-peaceful protesters all tend to be adept at throwing things. Characters will most likely end up testing this skill in combat, unless The Man decides that Velvet and Mad Mother want to settle their differences with a friendly cricket match.

Vibe (Presence)

Perhaps the most versatile Mojo possessed by Starchildren, Vibe allows a character to get inside someone's head. She can affect emotions, read minds and alter perceptions with the right level of this Mojo. Unfortunately for Earthlings, this skill is only available to characters not-of-this-Earth. A more detailed description of Vibe can be found under Mojo in Chapter Six.

Vocals (Presence)

Whether you spent years in high-school choir, singing in the shower, or are just naturally talented, this skill means that people really like listening to your voice. Take a look at the Performance section of Chapter Six to find out how Vocals is used.

Attributes

Attributes are the basic qualities that every character possesses. There are eight Attributes. Conveniently, four of them are physical qualities and four are mental. As you can see on the character sheet, there is one physical and one mental Attribute related to each suit in a deck of cards. This suit is used when making Tests with that Attribute or the Skills based upon it.

The Attributes

Presence (Mental, ♢)

Presence is the strength of a character's personality and charisma, a staple of Rock gods since the beginning of time. Of course, dictators and cult leaders also excel in Presence, so if the music thing ever falls through, you character will always have a backup.

Wit (Mental, ♡)

Stand-up comedians, con men and philosophers tend to do better when they have a high Wit. Thinking quickly and making mental connections are covered by this attribute.

Perception (Mental, ♠)

Attention to detail, keen eyes and a great memory are the classic traits of detectives, composers and academics. Characters with high ranks in Perception would excel in these fields, or any other that requires a good mind.

Will (Mental, ♣)

People who never back down or compromise may not make many friends, but they usually get what they want. Though others might call

Shird Oxendine: Attributes

From the start, Kim knows that Shird's highest attribute has to be Perception (because it's linked to Repair), so she puts the Jack there. Next, she assigns a 10 to his Wit, figuring that it reflects his talent for snide jokes and quick thinking. Shird gets 9 in his Speed attribute, making him an above-average (but not exceptional) bassist. Next, she assigns 7s to his Appearance, Body and Will attributes. Shird spends quite a bit of time getting knocked around behind seedy dives, so Kim ranks his Agility as a below-average 6. Finally, Shird's lowest ranking gets assigned to his Presence, because his bitter wit is better at offending than winning people over.

Because Shird is a Starchild, his attributes are in for a little mixing up. His Presence and Appearance each go up two ranks, becoming 7 and 9, respectively. But Shird should try to avoid violence and confrontation as much as possible, because his Body and Will are dropped two levels, making them both rank 5.

them stubborn, they usually like to think of themselves as "willful."

Appearance (Physical, ♢)

Some people look good, some look great, and there are others that you just can't take your eyes off of. Sex appeal may be the first quality that leaps to mind, but good looks help a lot, even with people who aren't physically interested.

Speed (Physical, ♡)

Speed is the attribute that allows a guitar legend to play so fast you can't see his hands moving across the strings, or a dimmer to jump on you so fast you don't have time to feel the knife slide in.

Agility (Physical, ♠)

A good rank in this attribute means that the character always moves gracefully and has superb coordination. Dancers, acrobats and assassins tend to excel in Agility.

Body (Physical, ♣)

A character with a high Body rank is powerfully built, strong and can withstand more physical punishment than the average person. High Body ranks are often found among bouncers, riot cops and drummers.

Assigning Attributes

When making a character, you have eight card ranks to assign to your Attributes: Jack, 10, 8, 7, 7, 7, 6 and 5. Assign them however you wish, in a way that fits your idea of how your character should be. Higher ranks in an Attribute are, obviously, better.

For Earthling characters, this is a straightforward process. Simply write each rank next to the Attribute name and go. Starchild characters have one slight complication. Their alien minds and bodies are naturally gifted in some areas and deficient in others. As one might imagine after reading what human rock fans had to say about them, Starchildren are much more physically attractive and have strong personalities. Add two ranks to whatever is assigned to their Presence and Appearance Attributes. On the down side, the aliens are physically frail in comparison to the average Earthling. Subtract two ranks from their Body rating. Years of rock & roll upbringing on the way to Earth (as well as access to plentiful recreational drugs, engineered to have no negative side effects) also causes them to be a bit flighty and not particularly assertive. Subtract two ranks from their Will score as well. In other words, Starchild characters add two ranks to each of their Diamond Attributes and subtract two from each of the Club Attributes.

Secondary Traits

Certain details about your character are derived from her attributes. These secondary traits are her number of action cards, walking and running distance and damage thresholds. Don't worry if these terms make no sense right now; the Violence section in Chapter Six explains them all.

Action Cards

Action cards are an indicator of how often a character will be able to act in a fight. Find the line with your character's Speed rank on the Action Cards chart in the sidebar. Take a mental note of how many action cards your character will have, and tell The Man. He will assign you that number of cards from a deck. Write down the values of these cards on the back of your character sheet. The numerical values of your action cards don't matter, so don't worry if all the cards you get are low. To get the full story on how action cards are used, see The Action Deck in Chapter Six.

Movement

The distance a character can move when she really has to is based on her Speed attribute. Find your character's walking and running distances (given in yards) on the movement chart in the sidebar and write them in their spaces on the back side of your character sheet. Again, the Violence section of Chapter Six has all the details on how this number is used, but for now, all you need to do is write it down.

Damage Thresholds

The amount of damage a character can take in combat is derived from her Body rank. Don't worry if the numbers here don't make sense; their actual importance is explained in the Violence section of the rules chapter. Just find your character's Body rank on the Threshold Chart and write the corresponding numbers in on the back side of your character sheet.

Edges and Flaws

There are some qualities that characters possess that aren't learned abilities like skills or inborn traits like attributes. We call these qualities Edges (when they're positive) and Flaws (when they're a drawback). Players aren't obligated to take any Edges or Flaws for their characters, but having one or two will help round out a character and make her seem more "real."

Edges are good things for characters to have. An Edge may help out in certain types of tests, give the character some questionable or illegal equipment or contacts in an organization. Like all good things, an Edge has a cost, which is listed in its description below. This is the skill rank you have to pay in order to take the Edge (you could also use a skill rank higher than the cost of the Edge, if it was all you had). This can be paid with any skill ranking the character has, whether from her Backgrounds or elsewhere.

Action Cards

Speed	Action Cards
Ace-3	1
4-6	2
7-9	3
10-King	4
Queen	5

Damage Thresholds

Body	Trauma Threshold	Injury Threshold	Blackout Threshold	Overkill Threshold
Ace	3	3	15	30
2	3	5	18	33
3	6	7	21	36
4	6	9	24	39
5	9	11	27	42
6	9	13	30	45
7	12	15	33	48
8	12	17	36	51
9	15	19	39	54
10	15	21	42	57
Jack	18	23	45	60
King	18	25	48	63
Queen	21	27	51	66

Movement Distance

Speed	Walking Distance	Running Distance
Ace	2½	5
2-3	3	6
4-5	3½	7
6-8	4	8
9-10	4½	9
Jack-King	5	10
Queen	5½	11

Shird Oxendine: Action Cards

Kim looks over Shird's attributes and notes that she assigned him a Speed rank of 9. Finding 9 on the chart, she sees that this means he gets three action cards. She mentions this fact to The Man who will be running the game, and he assigns Shird's action cards: 5♦, 6♦, and 7♦. Kim writes these in the correct section of Shird's character sheet, and moves on.

Shird Oxendine: Movement Distance

Shird's movement distance is based on his Speed rank, just as his action cards were. Keeping in mind that Shird's Speed is a 9, she looks it up on the movement chart. At that Speed, his walking distance is 4½ yards, and he runs twice this distance, 9 yards. Finding the right spot on the character sheet, Kim fills these two numbers in.

Shird Oxendine: Damage Thresholds

Shird got lucky with his movement and action cards, since he has a fairly high Speed rank. His damage thresholds are all based on his Body rank, which is only a 5. Kim figures that Shird won't be able to stand up to a serious beating,

Flaws are problems that the character has, generally negative circumstances she has to deal with. These can relate to money, a past that comes back to haunt her or drug addiction. None of these sound like the sort of thing a player would want for her character, so there is a positive side to taking them. Every Flaw has a value listed with it. Taking it for your character gives you one free skill or Edge at this rank or lower (ranks from multiple Flaws can't be combined, and ranks from a single Flaw can't be divided up).

Many Edges and Flaws have variable costs. Each ranking in the description offers a similar effect, but not exactly the same. These variable-cost Edges and Flaws can be taken at any level the player wishes (or can afford, in the case of Edges). Some Edges and Flaws have other requirements, affected by a character's Backgrounds. For instance, any character with the Businessman Edge pays two ranks less for the Cash Edge. These will be listed in the description of the individual Edge or Flaw.

Edges

Authority (variable)

This Edge gives a character rank in some type of law enforcement agency. This also means that she has a chip implant that authorizes her to use police stun truncheons and riot guns (see the Equipment section in Chapter Six).

5: Patrol cop; authorized to use class C1 weapons.
7: Police Detective; authorized to use class C2 weapons
9: Police Sergeant; authorized to use class C3 weapons

Cash (variable)

The character starts with a reserve of extra funds (useable only for legal items). Businessmen can buy this Edge as if the cost were two ranks lower (so $10,000 would only cost a skill rank of 9)

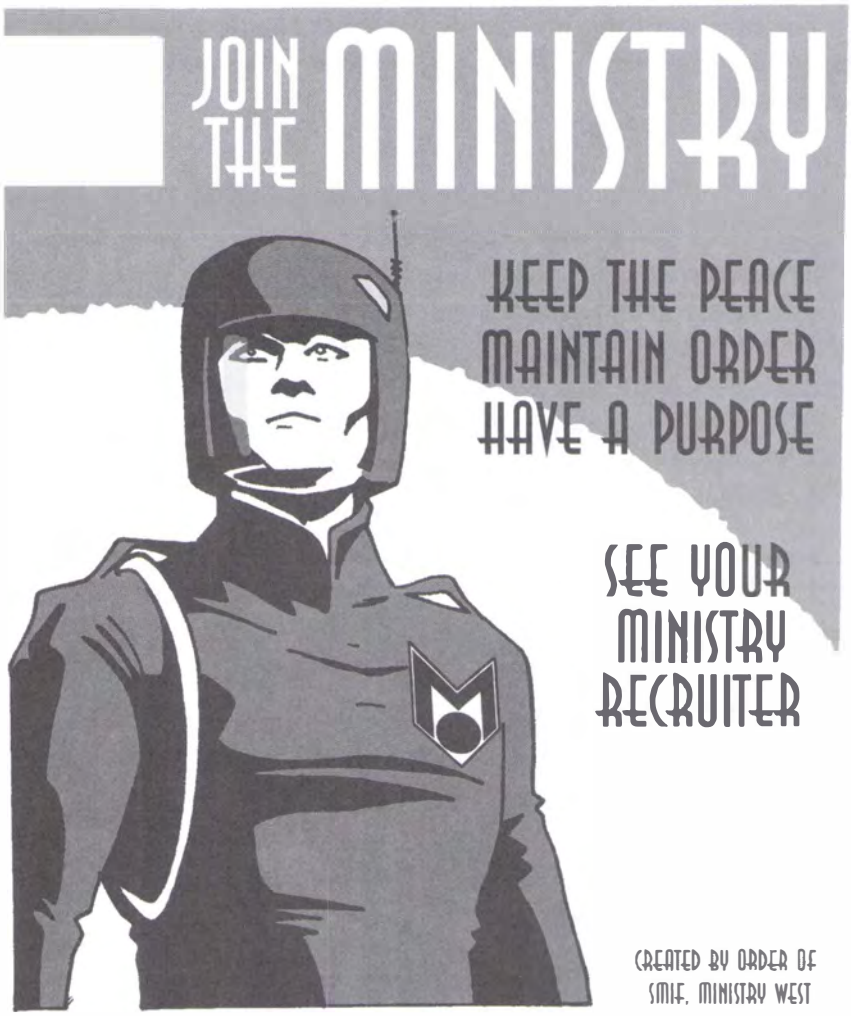
5: $500
7: $1000
9: $5000
Jack: $10,000

Cover Identity (7)

The character has a "secret identity," which can come in handy if she is ever suspected of criminal or revolutionary activity. For musicians, this cover is usually in the legal side of the music industry. The Man should require characters with this Edge to keep up the fake life, however, by going to work and doing whatever it is that normal people do.

Cred (variable)

The character is known and liked in quite a few social circles. Pick one of the following skills: Bluff, Etiquette, Persuade or Seduce. Based on her level of this Edge, she gets a number of Advantage Cards every time she makes a test of that skill. Characters can take this Edge more than once, as long as they choose a different skill from the list each time.



5: 1 Advantage Card
7: 2 Advantage Cards
9: 3 Advantage Cards

Contraband (variable)

A character with this Edge can begin the game with certain illegal equipment. Each level of this Edge has a Rarity level listed. When buying starting equipment (see below), the character can purchase illegal goods that have Rarity equal to or lower than this.

5: Rarity 1
7: Rarity 2
9: Rarity 3

Fame (variable)

The character's band is somewhat well-known. All members of a band buy this Edge individually, but the Fame points are added up to figure out the band's actual notoriety. Details on what Fame does for your band are given in the Performance section of Chapter Seven.

5: 10 Fame
7: 15 Fame
9: 20 Fame

and pats herself on the back for remembering to get Dodge.

Looking at the damage thresholds chart, she finds the line for Shird's rather weak Body rank. At rank 5, his trauma threshold is 9, injury threshold is 11, blackout threshold is 27 and overkill is 42. The spaces for these numbers are on the back of the character sheet, so she fills them in.

Shird Oxendine: Edges and Flaws

Kim is almost finished making her character, but knows that Shird is going to have a few Edges and Flaws. She already set aside one skill rank for an Edge earlier, and knows that she wants Shird to take advantage of his alien heritage and have a Mojo or two, so some Flaws will be necessary. Being a person who likes to hear the bad news first, Kim looks over the list of Flaws. First, she decides that Shird will be able to make some money doing "legitimate" work during the days, utilizing his technical skills, so she takes Day Job at rank 5. Having already covered Shird's cynical exterior, Kim wants something to show that he's really just covering up a more sensitive personality. Further down the list, she finds Vulnerability, and decides that this is it. Shird's vulnerability is his girlfriend, an average suburban girl he met

when she brought a broken computer to him to be fixed. He does what he can to keep her away from the dangerous music scene, and tries to keep his alien nature a secret.

From Shird's Flaws, Kim has now racked up two free levels (a 5 and a 7), which can be used for Edges or skills. She also has the 7 rank left over from Shird's Guitarist Background, which can only be used for an Edge. Since he's an outlaw bassist, Shird is obviously going to need an instrument, so Kim spends the 7 rank she saved from the Guitarist Background on the Contraband Edge, in order to get all the necessary equipment. Since his day job will naturally earn him some extra funds, Kim puts the 5 rank into the Cash Edge. Kim is left with a rank of 7 that can be spent on any Edge or skill, which she uses to get Shird a rank in Sparkle..

Having finished with all this, Kim fills in Shird's Edges:

Cash: 5
Contraband: 7

...and his Flaws:

Day Job: 5
Vulnerability: 7

She also remembers to write down the addition to his skill list:

Sparkle: 7

Fans (variable)

The character has a number of Fans that have special reverence for her and her bandmates. Like Fame, the entire band pools their fanbase together.

5: 5 fans
7: 10 fans
9: 20 fans

Favor (variable)

Someone, somewhere owes the character a favor. The character can call in this favor once (and only once) whenever she wants. The level of the Edge gives examples of the level of the debtor's obligation.

5: The debtor will watch over a person or contraband item for a day
7: The favor can be mildly dangerous or a risk to the debtor's job.
9: The debtor will help commit a serious crime to repay the favor.

Feared (variable)

The character has a scary reputation, and knows how to use it to her advantage. Pick one of the following skills: Detect Lies, Impress, Intimidate or Negotiate. The character gets a number of Advantage Cards on all tests of that skill, based on the level of this Edge. Characters can take this Edge more than once, as long as they choose a different skill from the list each time.

5: 1 Advantage Card
7: 2 Advantage Cards
9: 3 Advantage Cards

Gang (5)

The character is a member of an organized criminal outfit. This could mean a small-time street gang, a criminal syndicate or even the Blue Army. As a member, the character can occasionally call on her gang for help, but she is also expected to help out other members if they need it.

Inconspicuous (5)

The character has spent so much time on the streets that she blends into the background in the eyes of cops and higher classes. She gets an Advantage Card on all Bluff and Sneak tests made against such people.

Official Contacts (variable)

The character knows some people in key political positions. She gets Advantage Cards on all Bureaucracy tests, depending on the level of this Edge.

5: 1 Advantage Card
7: 2 Advantage Cards
9: 3 Advantage Cards

Permit (variable)

Characters with this Edge have clearance to own and operate one type of restricted gear, either weaponry or musical gear. She gets a certain clearance level, depending on her rank in the Edge, and can pur-

chase equipment up to and including that clearance (see the Equipment section of Chapter Six for details).

5: C1 music permit
7: C2 music permit or C1 weapon permit
9: C2 weapon permit

Street Contacts (variable)

The character knows people in every gutter and dark alley in her hometown. She gets Advantage Cards on all Streetwise tests, depending on the level of this Edge.

5: 1 Advantage Card
7: 2 Advantage Cards
9: 3 Advantage Cards

Undercover (7)

A cop with this Edge has a firmly entrenched false identity in the music or criminal world. Her cover is just about flawless, and even the extensive checkups performed by groups such as Velvet, the Blue Army or crime syndicates won't detect a hint of fakery. Of course, if the cop wants to also belong to any of these groups, she has to take the appropriate Edges in addition to Undercover.

Velvet Membership (5)

The character is a member of Velvet, the revolutionary Rock organization, and is privy to information and contacts through the network. Once per game session, the character can use this Edge as if it were a rank 5 in Cred, Feared, Official Contacts, Street Contacts or Favor after getting in touch with a contact within Velvet. Velvet doesn't like people abusing their network for personal gain, though. Any use of this Edge should be justified as helping the revolution somehow.

Flaw List

Addiction (variable)

The character is physically addicted to a drug or other substance (characters with psychological addictions should take the Vice Flaw). See the Drugs section of Chapter Six for the details of what addiction can do to a character.

5: Dabbler
7: Fiend
9: Junkie

Cautious (5)

A character with this Flaw tends to avoid any illegal, dangerous or morally questionable involvements, unless it becomes absolutely necessary. This could be because she is in some privileged position and fears losing it, or because she has a genuine distaste for such things.

Day Job (variable)

The character has some sort of commitment on most days. Characters that have the Cash Edge usually take this Flaw.

5: Part-time job: 25 hours per week.

7: Full-time job: 9-5, 5 days per week.

Debt (variable)

The character owes someone big. The level of the Flaw determines the risk the character has to take to repay the debt.

5: Get in a fight.

7: Risk your job or reputation.

9: Risk your life.

Dirty Secret (7)

Some fact, if brought to the right peoples' attention, will ruin the character's life-as-she-knows-it. This usually isn't a criminal secret (unless the character is a cop), but something that the character would be embarrassed or ashamed to admit.

Hunted (variable)

Someone is actively pursuing the character. Whether the hunters are cops, criminals, angry husbands or something else, they will eventually catch up (The Man should see to that). The level of the Flaw is based on what the character did to deserve this attention, how hard the hunter is looking and what he might do when he catches up to her.

5: Minor crimes or offenses: vandalism, scuffing a mob boss's shoe.

7: Major offenses; aggravated assault, arson, drug or music dealing.

9: Murder, smuggling contraband.

Obvious (7)

Although rock music is illegal, the Ministry hasn't yet managed to outlaw looking like a rock star. If they ever do, characters with this Flaw are going to be the first ones rounded up. Not only do they dress, style their hair and act like rockers all the time, but they also refuse to change this behavior unless it's literally a matter of life and death. Though a character can't be arrested for her appearance, she is likely to attract the suspicion of cops and nosy neighbors.

Po' (7)

A character with this Flaw starts with no cash to buy equipment; she has only the clothes on her back and a small place to live (though, with no money, the character should figure out how she's going to pay rent).

Squatter (9)

A character with this Flaw may end up living on the streets; she has no place she can (legally) call home. Beyond that, her friends and bandmates aren't likely to let her crash at their places for very long, either.

Squeamish (5)

Characters with this Flaw are generally unwilling to get into any sort of violent confrontation. They will surrender to cops rather than risk a beating, won't agree to do anything that might possibly get them hurt (like watch the street for cops while the band moves gear into a club), and are basically unreliable in any stressful situation. The character can temporarily overcome the effects of this Flaw by succeeding at a Guts test. The Man decides the difficulty of the test based on how much danger the character is in (or thinks she's in).

Usual Suspect (7)

This Flaw makes a character well-known to all sorts of local law enforcement. Whenever anything big and illegal happens, cops will assuredly be at her door. Usually, it's just to "ask a few questions," but occasionally the character will find herself arrested on simple suspicion.

Vice (5)

The character has some bad, possibly harmful habit, but not one that's as dangerous as a serious addiction. Characters can have Vices for sex, junk food, gambling, etc.

Vulnerability (7)

This Flaw means that the character knows someone who can be used against her by an enemy. It may be a girl/boyfriend, parent, child or any other person close to the character. If this person is put into danger, the character will go to almost any length to get them out.

Getting Equipped

The last thing you have to do before your character is ready for her first session is make sure she's well-prepared for what she's getting into. By now, you should know what kind of possessions your character is likely to have. If she's a musician, she'll probably need an instrument. Techies are rarely far from their tool kits, and anyone preparing for violence would be wise to carry some kind of weapon.

Beginning characters have $5000 (plus any extra funds from the Cash Edge) to buy any gear they might need from the Equipment section of Chapter Six. After going through the lists and writing all your gear on the back side of your character sheet, take any leftover funds and divide them by 10 to figure out how much "spending money" your character has.

Hitting The Road

Now, your character is complete and you're ready to jump into the game. You might want to take a look at Chapter Six to get an idea how the rules work, or you might want to learn as you go. Either way, you and your character are about to take on the world. Hope you're ready for it.

Starchildren
velvet generation

Name: Shird Oxendine

Descent: Starchild

7 Presence ♢ Appearance 9

♡Blend:	♡	♡Flex:	♡
♡Intimidate:	♡	♡Impress: 5	♡
♡Persuade:	♡	♡Seduce:	♡
♡Vibe: 9	♡	♡Sparkle:	♡
♡Vocals:	♡	♡	♡
♡	♡	♡	♡

10 Wit ♡ Speed 9

♢Bluff:	♢Keyboards:	♢Dodge: 7	♢
♢Break-In:	♢Lyrics:	♢Guitar: 7	♢
♢Bureaucracy:	♢Streetwise:	♢	♢
♢Computer: 5	♢	♢	♢
♢Fashion:	♢	♢	♢
♢Investigate:	♢	♢	♢

Jack Perception ♠ Agility 6

♣Alertness: 7	♣Repair: 10 (Instrument)	♣Bludgeon:	♣
♣Compose: 5	♣Search:	♣Brawl: 5	♣
♣Conceal:	♣Shoot:	♣Slash:	♣
♣Detect Lies:	♣Knowledge: 7 (Rock History)	♣Throw:	♣
♣Drive: 5	♣	♣Sneak:	♣
♣Promote:	♣	♣	♣

5 Will ♣ Body 5

♠Guts:	♠	♠Iron Stomach:	♠
♠Negotiate:	♠	♠Percussion:	♠
♠	♠	♠	♠
♠	♠	♠	♠
♠	♠	♠	♠
♠	♠	♠	♠

Backgrounds

Guitarist

Technician

Freelancer

Edges

Cash: 5

Contraband: 7

Flaws

Day Job: 5

Vulnerability: 7

Starchildren
velvet generation

Combat

Action Cards

5♢ 6♢ 7♢

Thresholds

Trauma: 9

Injury: 11

Blackout: 27

Overkill: 42

Walk: 4½

Run: 9

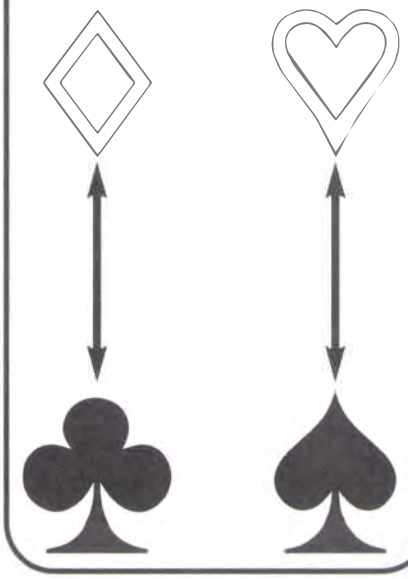
Wounds:

Fatigue:

Weapons

Weapon	ROF	Range	Damage	Capacity	Bulk

Trump/Null Suits



Notes

Gear

Electric Bass (shoddy)
Practice Amp
Instrument Toolkit

Character Sketch

Chapter Six:
Get it On

Over the course of the game, players will find their characters in all sorts of situations. Most scenarios can be handled within the game group either by The Man's narration or in-character portrayal by the players. This chapter exists because of the exceptions to this rule: the situations where roleplaying alone won't carry the entire story. These rules systems can occasionally add suspense to game play, can help the players get through situations that would be dangerous or impossible to simulate themselves and can take some narrative burden off the shoulders of The Man.

The first (and most important) rule is that what The Man says goes. He is the person most responsible for the game continuing smoothly, and if he says something, it happens. Even when a situation could be handled using these rules, The Man has the option to handle it with narrative instead. Of course, this means that The Man has to be fair, and allow players the opportunity to portray their characters as they wish. Roleplaying is about making a story as a group, not passively listening to one person dictate events.

Cards

As it says in Chapter One, the group needs to have at least two decks of cards to play the game. These shouldn't be too hard to acquire; most people have one or two decks lying around the house somewhere. One deck will be used to determine the outcome of tests (see the Basics section for more details), and is called the Test Deck. The other will be used to keep order in confrontations (see Violence, below), and is called the Action Deck.

The ranking of cards in the game is different from what you may expect if you're familiar with poker or other card games. First, the Ace is considered a low card, being equal to one. Also, the ranks of Kings and Queens are reversed, making the Queen the highest card. Jokers have no rank, and are a sort of wild card. The list in the sidebar shows the correct card ranks, from highest to lowest.

Card Ranks

Queen
King
Jack
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
Ace

Option: Backup Decks

The rules systems in this chapter are designed to move as fast as possible without interfering with play. However, when the group is going through cards quickly, reshuffling the decks can take up a lot of time. This can be fixed for the Test Deck by shuffling two complete poker decks together. The Action Deck is different, and shouldn't be

When a character attempts something that can't be handled with pure roleplaying, a test is called for. A test is a contest of a character's abilities (skills or attributes) against an external force or another character. Common examples include: a test of Conceal to hide a tape on your body, a test of Brawl when trying to punch another character, or a test of Persuade to convince an instrument dealer to let a vintage bass go at half its street value, to name a few.

Hands

At the beginning of each game session, every player draws a hand of five cards from the test deck. The Man also draws a hand, but he holds seven cards instead of five. Throughout the session, players will spend, redraw, and may even lose cards from their hand, but will never permanently hold more than five cards. Everyone always draws a fresh hand at the beginning of a session, though, so you don't have to remember what cards you were holding at the last game.

Simple Tests

Usually, the opposition a character faces in a test comes from an object or force rather than another character. In this kind of situation, the outcome of her action is determined by a simple test. This is played out like a mini card game, with the player and The Man each choosing cards in an attempt to beat the other. The worth of a player's card is based on its suit, and The Man's card is worth its face value.

Player's Card

Most of the time, when a player uses a card from her hand, it will be the suit, and not the face value, that will determine whether she succeeds at the test. Take a look at the character sheet. Notice that every skill is listed underneath an attribute. The skill and attribute each have a different suit symbol next to them (For example, the Computer skill has a ♢ symbol next to it, and is listed under Wit, which is marked with a ♡). These are the trump suits for that skill and attribute (the attribute and skill trumps will always be two suits of the same color).

If the player's card is a trump for her skill, its value is equal to her rank in that skill (so, for a Computer test, any Diamond is worth the character's skill rank). If the card's suit is trump for the attribute listed above the skill, it is worth her rank in that attribute (so a Hearts is worth the character's Wit rank in a Computer test).

The two non-trump suits are called "nulls," and are always worth less than the trumps. Each trump has a corresponding null suit: the null suit of Hearts is Spades, and the null of Diamonds is Clubs (these relations are reversed when Spades and Clubs are trump). A null card is worth three ranks less than its counterpart trump. So, in a Computer test, Clubs is the null suit for the skill, and Spades are null for the attribute.

Keep in mind that the actual suits that are null or trump vary depending on the skill being tested. Though this section uses a Com-

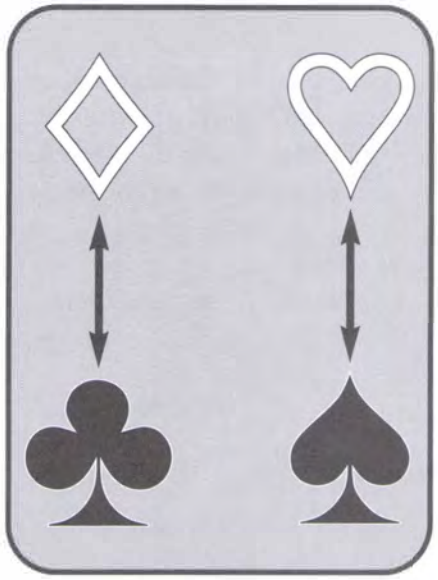
combined with another. However, it can be helpful to have a backup Action Deck shuffled and ready to go for when the first one runs out. Even without having these backups, game play should run smoothly and quickly, so extra decks are by no means necessary.

Example: Simple Tests

Shird Oxendine is not having a pleasant night. His band, the Brain Worms, are five minutes away from going onstage to open up for the band that opened up for Samizdat three months ago. This is going to be their biggest break ever, and the drummer, Savage Henry, accidentally rips a giant hole in one of his skins. Hearing that familiar dull popping sound, Shird is over by the drum kit with his tools before Henry can say, "me broke it."

In order to replace the skin, Kim (Shird's player) has to test his Repair (Instrument) skill, which falls under Perception on the character sheet. The Man says that this test has a difficulty of two, because of the short time Shird has to get the job done. The trump suit for Repair is Clubs, and the Perception trump is Spades, so any club Kim plays from her hand will be worth the same as Shird's Repair rank (which is 10), and any spade will be worth his Perception (Jack). Looking over her hand, Kim is holding the following cards: 2♣, K♡, Q♢, A♡, 10♢. Since

puter test for an example, the trump and null suits would be different if it were a test of Dodge, Endurance or Impress. The diagram in the sidebar should help you understand which suits are null for which trumps, if you get mixed up. This diagram is also on the back of your character sheet.



Raw Attribute Tests

Testing an attribute is a bit different than testing a skill. Fortunately for players, it's also a little easier. In these cases, both trumps are worth the character's attribute rank. Likewise, both null suits are worth three ranks lower than the attribute.

If You Don't Have The Right Skill

It helps to know what you're doing. Succeeding at a test without having the appropriate skill is hard, but certainly not impossible. In this situation, the two suits related to skill rank simply have no value, but the attribute suits can be played normally.

Difficulty Level

All simple tests have a difficulty level, which is a number usually between one and five. The Man decides the difficulty for each test based on what the character is trying to achieve. The harder the action, the higher the difficulty level. Most tests should have a difficulty level of three or less; only very skilled or lucky characters have a decent chance at winning a test at higher difficulty.

Less Than One

Some tests are so simple that even an unskilled character can do well in ideal circumstances. But, the possibility of failure exists if the character is under pressure. These tests have a difficulty level of either "Mundane" or "Foolproof." At these difficulty levels, The Man draws a single card for the test, but when he plays it, the card is worth less than its face value. In a Mundane test, The Man's card counts as three ranks below its face value. For a Foolproof test, his card counts at six ranks below face value. These modifiers can cause The Man's card to be lower than an Ace.

Going Easy

Usually, The Man will play the highest card he draws for a test. However, he does have the option of playing any of the cards he draws. Usually, this is done if The Man feels that the characters have had a rough time and need a break. However, this is also useful if a test would reveal some crucial information that is necessary to move the plot along. The Man can play a low card so that the characters get the necessary clue, but the players won't know that they are being fed information.

The Man's Card

The Man draws a number of cards equal to the test's difficulty level from the Test Deck. Without showing these cards to the players, he chooses the highest one and plays it. Unlike a player's card, The Man's

the 2 is the only trump she has, she plays it, confident that Shird's high rank in Repair is enough to succeed.

Now it's time for The Man to draw. The test difficulty is two, so he pulls two cards from the top of the Test Deck: a 2♡ and an 8♠. He picks the 8♠ and sets it facedown on the table in front of him. He and Kim flip their cards over at the same time. Kim's card is worth 10, which beats The Man's 8 easily. Kim tosses away the spent card and draws a 4♡ to replace it, and Shird manages to get the drum skin attached just as the group has to get moving onto the stage.

Example: Burning Cards

After the show, Shird is the only band member sober enough to drive home. As he's driving through an intersection, a white van comes from his right, blows a red light, and swerves straight at the car. The Man tells Kim to make a

Drive test at difficulty 3 in order to avoid getting hit. Shird's rank in Drive is only 5, so the situation looks grim. Drive is a Perception skill, so the trump suits are the same as the Repair test she made before the gig: Clubs for the skill, and Spades for the attribute. Kim's problem is that she's not holding any clubs or spades this time. Hearts is the null suit for Spades, so if she plays one, it counts as three ranks below Shird's Perception (or 8). Diamonds will be worth three ranks less than his Drive skill (or 2, which wouldn't be a good idea). Kim decides to play the K♡, and hopes that it will be enough.

The Man draws three cards for the test difficulty, and gets a 2♢, a 3♣ and a 10♡. When The Man turns his card over, Kim sees that she's going to fail, since the Heart she played is only worth 8. But she has one last option. She burns her card, so that it's worth its face value instead. The King allows Shird to easily get away from the out-of-control van. The van runs right past the group, swerves again, and crashes head-on into a streetlight. Kim discards her spent card, but can't replace it because she burned.

Example: Opposed Tests

After narrowly avoiding sudden death by way of out-of-control van, and then seeing

card is worth its face value, regardless of the suit. (In simple tests, at least. Opposed tests are different, and are described a bit further down).

Jokers

Of course, there are also those cards that just don't fit in anywhere else. With no suit or face value, the Joker is traditionally the wild card in most games. The same is true in this one. When a player uses a Joker, she can play it as any one of the four suits, but it has no face value at all (this means that it's worthless if The Man plays it). Holding onto a Joker has its benefits as well. At the end of the game session, when The Man is awarding experience, any player that is still holding a Joker in her hand gets one extra point. See "Learning Experiences" later in this chapter for the details on what experience can do for you.

Making the Play

After both participants have chosen their cards, they turn them over at the same time to reveal the winner. If the worth of the player's card (remember that this is based on suit, not face value) is equal to or higher than The Man's, she succeeds and her action is carried out as she described. If her card's worth is lower than The Man's, she still has one last-ditch chance to pass the test: burning a card.

Burning Cards

A character's abilities can only take her so far. After both the player and The Man have revealed their cards, the player may choose to burn. When she burns, her card is worth its face value, regardless of its suit or the character's abilities (Jokers, having no face value, can't be burned). Burning a card represents an amazing stroke of luck that comes to the character's rescue at the last second, saving her from failure. Of course, there is a cost for pushing your luck like this, which comes at the end of the test.

Ending the Test

After both participants have played their cards and determined the character's success or failure, they put all the used cards in the discard pile. As long as she didn't burn a card, the player can draw a new card from the Test Deck to replace the one she spent. If a player burned a card in the test, she doesn't get to redraw afterward, and is left with one fewer card in her hand.

Opposed Tests

Simple tests are fine when a character wants to seduce a car or fight a wall, but trying to do something with someone else actively trying to stop you is something else entirely. A situation like this calls for an opposed test. The only real difference between simple and opposed tests is how The Man plays his card. Players choose and play cards just like they do in simple tests.

First, opposed tests don't have difficulty levels. Rather than drawing cards from the Test Deck, The Man plays a card from his hand just as if he were a player. This means that the value of his card is based on its

suit, using the skill ranks of the MC that is working against the player. This also means that The Man has the option to burn a card, or anything else that a player can normally do.

An opposed test is resolved normally. As usual, if the player's card is equal to or better than The Man's, she succeeds. Both participants redraw cards as normal (unless they burned in the test).

Between PCs

Opposed tests can also come up between player characters, if a conflict requires it. In this case, both players use cards from their own hands, just like any other test. The only difference between this situation and a normal opposed test is that a tie between players has to be decided by The Man. He can choose to do this randomly by flipping a coin or drawing a card, or he can just choose an outcome, depending on what suits the story better.

Boosts and Crashes

Sometimes a character's degree of success or failure is important to the result of a test. Boosts and Crashes are a way of measuring this degree. If a character beats The Man's card in a test by three ranks, she gets a boost on the test. Beating a test by six ranks gains the character two boosts, and so on. More Boosts mean a more spectacular success.

Of course, there's also the negative side. Characters that fail by three ranks "crash" the test, and usually suffer some terrible result for their failure. Just as a character can gain multiple boosts, she can also gain multiple crashes, if she gets really unlucky.

Some of the rules systems in this chapter list specific effects for boosts and crashes, but in some cases, The Man will have to decide the specifics. Crashing a test to attack in a fight may cause a character to accidentally hit her friend, while a character that gains a boost on an attempt to program a synthesizer might get the job done in half the time. As always, The Man's decision is final.

Advantage Cards

Sometimes, a character will have a circumstantial edge in a test. This kind of Edge is represented in the game by Advantage Cards. The Man can choose to give a player up to three Advantage Cards for a single test. Before the test, the player draws this number of extra cards from the Test Deck.

She has the option to play from her Advantage Cards instead of her hand. Advantage Cards are valued just like cards from a player's hand, and can even be burned. After a test, players discard all of their Advantage Cards, and don't draw to replace any of them. This is why burning Advantage Cards is a good idea: they get discarded afterwards either way.

Difficulty and Advantage Cards

Because opposed and static tests are handled so differently, the same modifiers don't always apply. In general, any time circumstances would cause a character to suffer a difficulty increase, that increase can be treat-

said van smash into a lamppost, Shird decides to investigate further. The rest of the Brain Worms choose to stay back, to "make sure the car is safe." Shird gets out of the car and walks over toward the van, peering through the passenger window. When the driver, bleeding from a cut on his forehead, sees Shird, he frantically begins trying to undo his seatbelt and get out of the car. Shird starts to run around the van, hoping to catch the driver before he can escape the van. The Man asks Kim to make an opposed Speed test. Shird's Speed is 9, and Kim has a hand full of hearts and diamonds. Because this is a test of an attribute and not a skill, both Hearts and Diamonds are worth Shird's Speed rank. Kim lays down her A♡.

The Man picks the 8♢ from his hand and plays it. The driver's Speed rank is only 6, so he doesn't have much of a chance against Oxendine. Shird has time to dash around the vehicle before the driver can even get his door unlocked. The Man and Kim both discard their cards and draw from the Test Deck to replace them. Shird holds the door firmly shut and yells out to the rest of the band.

Group Tests

It is possible for more that two characters to oppose each others' actions. In this case, all involved participate in a group

test. The test is carried out like an opposed test, except that everyone plays a card, and whoever ends up with the highest succeeds.

Secret Tests

All too often, a character will have no way of knowing whether her efforts succeed or fail. For tests like this, the player and The Man both play cards normally, except that, in the end, The Man doesn't turn over his card. He just makes a mental note of how well the character did, and continues with the story. Players can still burn cards in secret tests, but they have to make that decision without knowing whether it will help at all.

Test to Overcome

Sometimes a character will be testing to undo the result of a previous test. This isn't an opposed test, because the attempt isn't being actively blocked by another character. Rather, this situation requires the character to make a test to overcome. This is handled like any other simple test. The basic difficulty to overcome another character's efforts is one. This difficulty goes up by one for every boost that character gained on her original efforts.

For example, suppose a Mad Mother agent is trying to decrypt a file that may or may

ed as an extra Advantage Card for the character's opponent in an opposed test. For example, attempting an action while running causes a +1 difficulty to all actions. Since opposed tests have no difficulty ratings, the running character's opponent in any of these tests gets one Advantage Card greater than normal.

Twists

If a character just can't win through her own ability, she may need to push her luck. This is where twists come in. Players can spend twists to get a number of perks for their characters. First, during a test, spending a twist can add three ranks to the value of a player's card (even if that means increasing it past Queen). This can mean the difference between success and a boost, or a crash and a plain failure. Second, a player can spend a twist at any time to replace a card she burned from her hand earlier in the session. This can only be used to replace lost cards, not to draw more cards than the original five. Last, a player holding no decent cards at all can spend a twist to redraw her entire hand. This is an all-or-nothing redraw; you can't hold onto the couple good cards and only throw away the bad ones.

Anything small, inexpensive and plentiful can be used to represent a twist. We suggest guitar picks, because they're usually free and go with

the theme of the game, but your group can use anything appropriate that it has at hand: poker chips, coins, glass beads or strange plastic polyhedrons with numbers on the sides.

The Man hands out twist counters at the beginning of each session. Players get between two and four twists each session. If The Man thinks there will be a lot of tests during a session (for instance, if he has a big fight planned), he may hand out three or four, but for most sessions, two twists will be quite enough. Also, if a player ends up too deep in trouble, she can spend one of her saved Experience Points for two twists. This should only be done rarely, though, because twists can't be turned into Experience, even if they are never used. Any twists left over at the end of a game session are lost, so players might wish to use up their leftovers as the game draws to a close.

Violence

Starchildren (and the Earthlings that flock around them) live in a very hostile world. Shows end in police raids more often than not, and the Dims aren't the safest areas of town, even on a good night. Often, characters will have to fight to survive. Fights are naturally a chaotic and disorganized mess, so they need special rules to keep the game flowing smoothly.

Actions

Every time a fight breaks out, the same thing happens–one person (or more) is trying to hurt someone else. The "someone else" might be trying to fight back, get away or just get on with life. Anything a character might do in a fight is called an "action." Yelling for help, dodging flying fists and taunting with insults are just as much part of combat as pulling triggers and swinging fists. Most actions in combat (especially attacks) happen incredibly quickly.

The Action Deck

The deck that The Man uses to keep track of events in a fight is called the Action Deck. Instead of using all 54 cards, the Action Deck only contains the action cards of all participants in the fight (both PCs and MCs), plus both Jokers. The Man should remove all unused cards from the deck beforehand. It's a good idea for The Man to keep the Action Deck shuffled and in reach any time there's a chance that a fight will break out in the game.

Rounds

A round is the basic unit of time in combat. Each round is about equal to two seconds, and is represented by a single trip through the Action Deck. At the start of every round, The Man flips over the top card of the shuffled Deck. Any character with this as her Action Card can act. If two characters have the same Action Card (which shouldn't happen too often), they declare their actions in order of Wit scores, from lowest to highest. Unless the action has a Preparation time above

not contain music files from a renegade band. The band's resident Tinker gained two boosts on her Computer test to scramble the information, so the agent has to make his Computer test against a difficulty level three to access the file.

Option: Long Rounds

The rules for timing in combat are written to ensure that fights are unpredictable. No two rounds will play out exactly the same, and players have very little time to plan their actions. However, some slow characters may find themselves unable to do anything in combat. If this becomes a problem, The Man can choose to make rounds longer. Remove all Jokers from the Action Deck. Instead, The Man deals through every Action Card in the Deck, and reshuffles at the end. Characters will always get their full Action Card allotment, so no one ends up sitting around for too long. However, if players beg The Man to use this option, he should remind them (the hard way) that it benefits MCs just as well.

0 (which will be explained below), the player and The Man resolve the action right away (making a test if needed), The Man proceeds to flip another card off the top of the Deck, and so on.

When The Man pulls the second joker from the Action Deck, the round is over and a new one begins. The Action Deck should be reshuffled, and The Man pulls a new card off of the top (unless the fight is over by then). Because of this, it is rare that any character will have her full allotment of Action Cards come up in a single round. Especially slow characters may not have any cards come up during certain rounds, but this will be rare.

Phases

Each flip of a card from the top of the Action Deck is called a phase. Think of a phase like a single breath (without holding it in); long enough to do something fast, make a snap decision, or to begin a longer task, but in reality, no two are exactly the same length. Every phase begins with a character declaring her action. Some actions may not be resolved in the same phase they were declared (see Preparation, below). After this, all actions that finish in this phase are resolved, and the results occur simultaneously.

Preparation

Most actions in combat happen very quickly. Punches, kicks and gunshots don't take long, and usually you often don't know they're happening until they're over. But sometimes actions take a bit longer, such as taking careful aim with a gun, performing a fast search or using Mojo.

All actions have a Preparation rating. Preparation is the number of phases that must pass before an action gets resolved. An action with a Preparation of 0 finishes at the end of the phase in which it was declared. Actions with a Preparation of 1 or higher take place that many phases after the action is declared. If another of a character's Action Cards comes up while she is in the middle of Preparation time, she can either use it as soon as her current action finishes, or she can start something else at the same time, but the second action is at a +1 difficulty penalty for doing two things at once (if a test is necessary). The Man may decide that a character is too occupied physically to start an action in the middle of doing something else. For example, if a character is reloading her pistol, she cannot start drawing another, because both her hands are occupied.

Holding Actions

Sometimes a character's Action Card doesn't pop up exactly when it is needed. If it comes up too late, there's not much that can be done about it. If it comes too early, however, there is some hope. A player can decide to put an Action Card on hold as soon as it comes up. She just declares that she's holding it, and takes the card from the Action Deck as a reminder. She can use the card at any time after this (even on a later round). However, she can't hold an action forever. If another of her Action Cards comes up while one is on hold, she loses the held card (though she can choose to hold the new card, of course). If she wants to use it on the same phase as another character, she has to attempt to interrupt that action with an opposed Speed test.

Movement

Keeping both feet firmly planted during every violent confrontation is a sure way to die young (probably not even leaving a good-looking corpse). Characters in combat can move a number of yards per round, depending on their Speed attribute. The chart listing movement rates for characters can be found in the character chapter. PCs should have their walking and running distances written on the back side of their character sheets.

Walking

Characters in a fight can move up to their full walking distance every round at no penalty. Characters can move either on their own Action Cards or on either Joker. Movement can be divided up over the course of a round however the player wishes, as long as a character doesn't exceed the total distance allowed.

Running

Characters who want to get from point A to point B a bit more quickly can move up to twice their walking distance in a round by running. Movement is handled exactly as it is with walking, so a character can run all of her movement on a single card, or disperse it more evenly over the round. The only bad part is that any attacks she makes while running have their difficulties increased one level.

Sprinting

When getting away from (or getting to) the action is all that really matters, a character can bolt even faster than her running speed. Unlike walking or running, sprinting takes up a character's whole phase, so she can't take any other actions at the same time. To sprint, a character must first run the longest distance possible in that phase (it doesn't make much sense to sprint while walking). She then makes an Endurance test at difficulty one. She can move one extra yard for succeeding at the test, plus one for each Boost. There are two strings attached to the extra distance, however. First, the extra movement for sprinting must be in a straight line. The character is spending too much effort on speed, and doesn't have time to go dodging around obstacles. Second, for every yard of movement gained by sprinting, the character takes one level of Fatigue. If the character happens to crash on the Endurance test, she gets winded and has to stop running for at least two rounds to catch her breath.

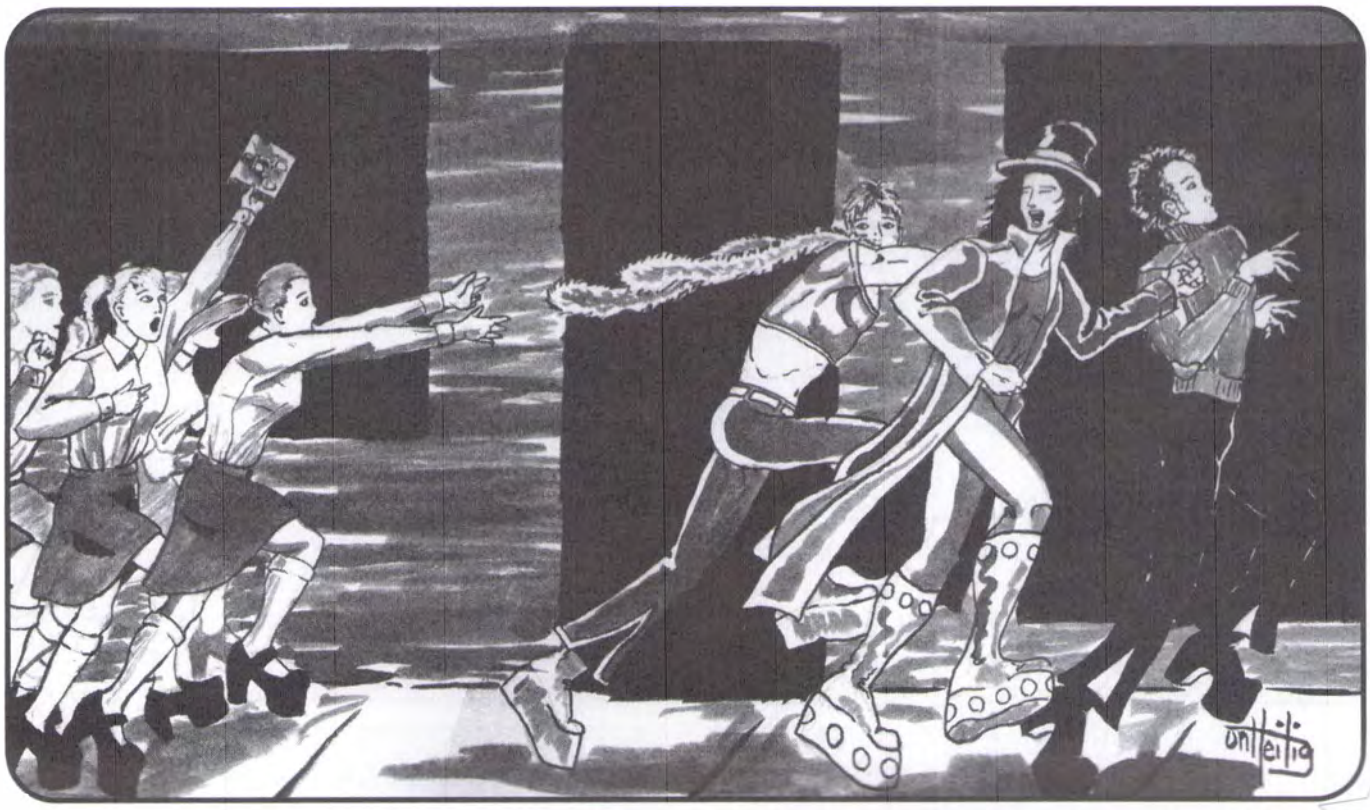
On Guard

If a character wasn't expecting a fight at the moment things first turn ugly, she makes a pretty easy target for more aware combatants. At the beginning of combat, characters are considered to be off-guard, and thus unable to defend themselves. Characters can spend an action to go on-guard. They can't attack or do anything but get on-guard during this action. All characters that fail to get on-guard (or decide not to) by the time the first Joker is pulled from the Action Deck automatically get their guards up.

Occasionally, characters will start a fight on-guard, if they had reason to expect trouble and weren't doing anything but paying very close attention to their possible opponents. The Man has the final say as to whether a character can reasonably be on-guard when the fight breaks out, based on what she was doing right before the violence started. If The Man is in doubt, he can call for an Alertness test on the character's behalf.

Attacking in Close Combat

A character trying to hit an opponent with bare hands in combat must succeed at a Brawl test. If the target is not on guard, the attacker has to succeed at a Static test with a Mundane difficulty (hitting someone who isn't expecting it is pretty easy). If a target is on guard, the attacker has to make an opposed test of her Brawl versus the target's Dodge skill. Characters attacking with other hand-to-hand weapons (like knives or truncheons) do things the same way, except that they substitute the appropriate attack skill for Brawl.



Combat Maneuvers

Even when a character isn't holding a weapon, she has several methods of attack at her disposal. She can choose to punch, kick or perform some other maneuver. A maneuver might give a character advantage levels on her Brawl test; it might do a bit of extra damage or have some other special effect.

Close-Combat Maneuvers

Attack	Advantage	Preparation	Damage Code
Punch	2	0	Body/0
Kick	1	0	Body+3/0
Headbutt	0	0	Body+5/0
Knee	0	1	Body+7/0
Stomp	3	1	Body+9/0

Headbutt: If a character attempts to attack with a headbutt and crashes her brawl test, she takes damage as if the target had headbutted her.

Stomp: This attack brings the full weight of a character down on the target, but is only useful if the victim is already on the ground.

The Pain

There are two ways for characters to get hurt by an attack: wounds and fatigue. Wounds are what people normally think of when it comes to fights: cuts, bullet holes, blunt trauma, etc. This is the kind of damage that can maim or kill a character. Fatigue can be just as painful, but it can't do any worse than knock you out. Fortunately for the rockers and kids of the Velvet Generation, the most common police weapons inflict more Fatigue damage than anything else.

Damage Codes

Every weapon and attack maneuver has a damage code to show exactly how badly it can hurt people. Damage codes have two parts, separated by a slash. The first part is a card rank, called Power. The second half is a number, and called Sharpness.

When a victim is hit by an attack, compare her Body to the attack's Power. If her Body is lower, she takes the difference in wounds, in addition to taking the full Sharpness of the attack. This kind of damage can add up fast, so characters may be wise to wear some kind of protection (see below).

Stun Attacks

Some weapons (such as police riot guns and stun truncheons) deal mostly non-lethal damage. These weapons have an "s" in their damage codes, right after Sharpness. The Sharpness of a stun attack is taken as Fatigue instead of wounds, so victims are more likely to just get knocked out. The attack's Power still does normal wounds, though, so these supposedly safe weapons can still seriously hurt weak characters.

Protection

Characters who are expecting trouble often make sure to wear protective clothing or armor. Armor can be stuff intended for the purpose, like the helmets and synthetic plating worn by riot cops, or it can simply be normal clothing that just happens to be tough, like a stiff leather jacket or knee-high boots. Some of the more "hardcore" underground bands have made protective clothing part of their stage shows, both to affect a tough image and because of the violence that often erupts at concerts.

All protective clothing has an armor code, which indicates how well it will keep the wearer from harm. Armor codes correspond to the damage code of a weapon. The first part is called Padding, and opposes the Power of an attack (unlike Power, Padding is a number, not a card rank). The second half of an armor code is Stiffness, and opposes Sharpness. Before applying damage from an attack, subtract each half of the victim's armor rating (if any) from its corresponding part of the damage code; Power minus Padding, and Sharpness minus Stiffness.

Trauma

Characters that take too much damage at once in combat have to spend some time recovering from the attack. All characters have a Trauma Threshold, which is based on their Body rating (see the sidebar for the exact numbers). Characters who take more than this much damage (fatigue and wounds) from a single attack are "traumatized" for the difference in phases. Any of a character's Action Cards that come up during this time are lost, along with any action she

is holding. A traumatized character counts as being off-guard until she recovers.

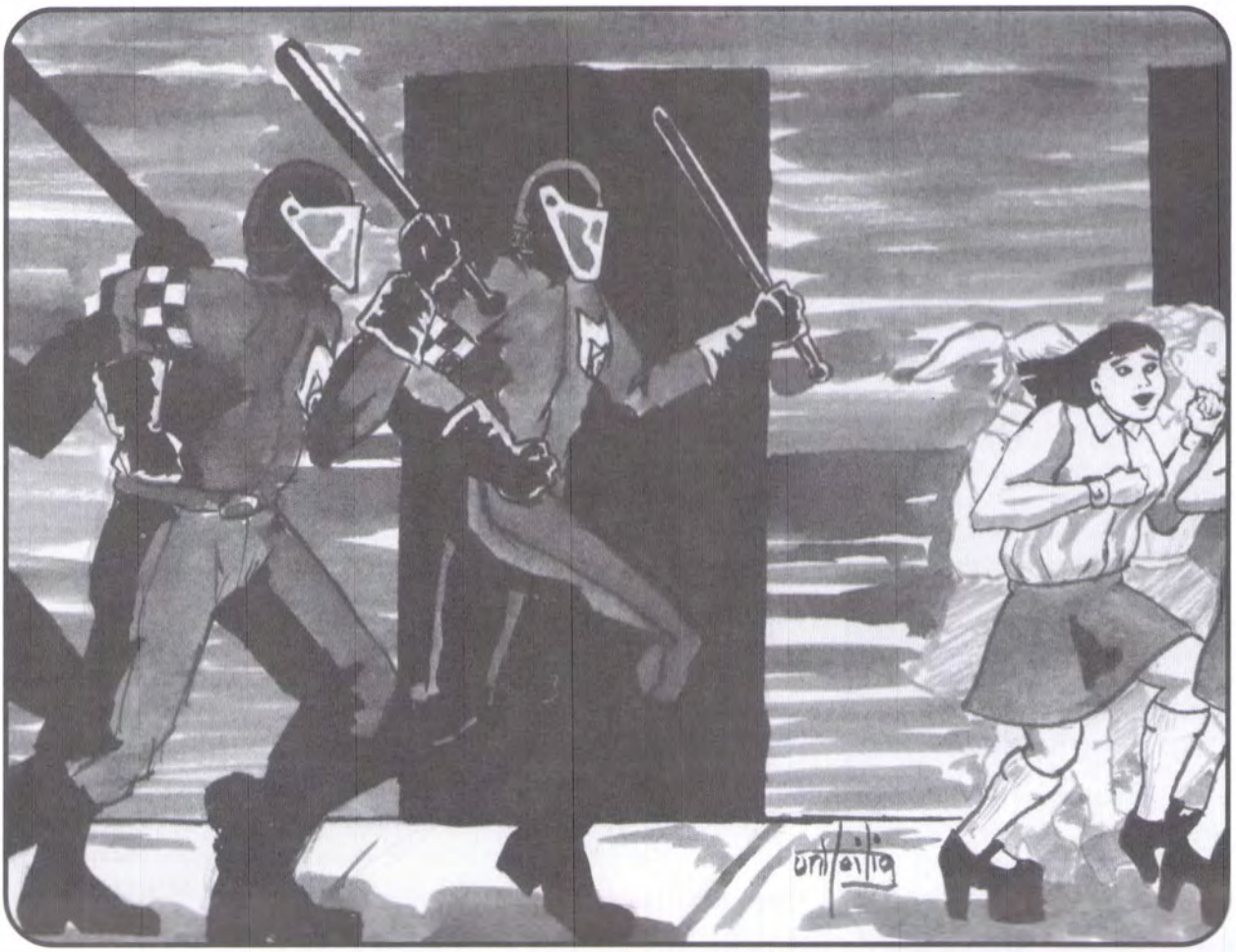
Dropping Out

You know a fight's not going your way as soon as black spots appear in your vision, your knees go weak and you get a face full of pavement. If it was a cop that just knocked you down, you should hope that he's had a pretty good day so far, so he might not decide to vent any frustrations on your kidneys while you're out. When a character hits the ground in combat, it's called Dropping Out, and there are two ways it might happen. First, as soon as her total damage (Fatigue and wounds) exceeds her Dropout Threshold (based on the Body attribute—see the sidebar for details), she'll go under. Second, if a single attack exceeds her Injury Threshold, she not only Drops Out, but she'll most likely have an injury after she recovers.

Dropping Out doesn't necessarily mean that the character is 100% unconscious. A character can be on the ground, writhing in pain and gasping for air and still be awake. Either way, she's effectively out of the fight until she can recover. She won't be able to communicate, travel very far or pay close attention to her surroundings. If The Man is feeling generous, he may let a Dropped character make a Perception test to pick out (and remember) details about her surroundings, such as the license plate on the car the attackers just drove away in.

Injuries

You can usually spot a long-time street fighter from a distance. If you don't notice the limp or the missing teeth, the network of scars is usually a dead giveaway. Characters who lose badly in a fight walk away with such souvenirs, when they walk away at all. There are two ways this can happen to a character: by a single attack that deals more wounds (not Fatigue) than her Injury Threshold, or if she takes more total wounds than her Overkill Threshold. Either way, she's going to wake up with a headache that's going to take a lot of Whitepills to fix.



Accessibility of Guns

Guns of any sort are unavailable to most people. Various law-enforcement agencies exist to investigate the possession, sale and manufacture of anything that can be considered a weapon. While it is easy to hide a knife or pair of brass knuckles from agents, a factory that churns out handguns and rifles by the hundreds each day is so obvious that the only people willing to risk it are the crime syndicates. That said, guns are not completely absent from the world. While beat cops carry nothing more menacing than a stun truncheon and the will to use it, police departments do have armories and "gun squads," armed with real, lead-throwing firearms, for use against violent criminals. Also, just like the law doesn't stop every rocker on the planet, it doesn't stop all gun trafficking. Connected people can usually get their hands on a gun or two, usually one stolen or

During the fight, the player should keep track of how many injury-causing hits she takes. After the fight, The Man draws this number of cards from a freshly shuffled deck, and picks the highest one. This card shows what injury the character suffers, according to the Injury chart in The Man's chapter. If the injured character gets medical attention within an hour (see below), the number of cards The Man draws for the Injury may be reduced. Because of this, he should wait to draw cards until a "medic" finishes her First Aid test, or as soon as it's too late for First Aid to help (one hour of game time).

Medical Attention

People with medical skills are invaluable to the revolution. Straight doctors don't believe you when you claim that you got those nightstick-shaped bruises on your back by falling down stairs or walking into a wall. Doctors ask questions, and if they fail to report any suspicious medical discoveries to the cops, they can lose their licenses. So, Velvet takes their medical help where they can find it. Discredited physicians pull bullets in backalley "clinics," and they rarely reveal exactly why it is they're not allowed to practice in the upscale joints anymore.

If a character takes enough damage to give her an Injury, it helps if there's someone around with the First Aid skill. If a doctor/paramedic/Boy Scout can reach the downed character within an hour, she can make a First Aid test (difficulty one). Success on this test means that The Man draws one less card to determine the Injury on the wounded character. Each Boost on the First Aid test also means The Man draws one less card.

Attacking From A Distance

Guns can easily turn a simple brawl into a deadly situation. In real life, gunfighting is fairly simple: pull a trigger, and someone probably dies. In the game, however, there are a few more things to consider before a character pulls that trigger, so the rules involved with guns are slightly different than with fists and feet. First, firearm attacks are always resolved with static tests, using the attacker's Shooting skill. These rules apply to characters using any straight-line ranged weapon, whether they are firearms or police stun guns.

Complications

The basic difficulty for a firearm attack is Foolproof, for a point-blank shot with no complications. The actual difficulty is usually higher, as circumstances can make it much harder for an attacker to hit.

Range

The basic difficulty to hit assumes that the attack is at point-blank range (within arms' reach). If the distance is any greater than this, the difficulty to hit increases. Every gun has a Range statistic, listed in yards. For every multiple of this distance between the attacker and the target, add one to the difficulty to hit with the gun. If a target is more than five times the Range of a gun, the attacker automatically fails to hit.

Moving Targets

Hitting a moving target is naturally harder than one that's standing there, just waiting for the bullet to strike. Add one to the difficulty to hit a target that is on foot and running. If the target is in a car or other vehicle, add one for every 30 miles per hour of the vehicle's speed. This penalty is just for movement in a more-or-less straight line, not necessarily for a target that is actively trying to dodge bullets. For that, see Evasion, below (though if a target is moving fast and dodging, apply both penalties).

Stability

Related to movement, but not quite the same thing, is the stability of the shooter. Regardless of speed, firing a gun is not easy when your arms are bouncing up and down wildly. A shooter who fires while running adds 2 to her difficulty from the jostling. Riding in a car down a smooth street would reduce this penalty to 1 (driving along a pitted and run-down street isn't any better than running). If an attacker were, for some reason, firing from a perfectly level and smooth moving vehicle (such as a monorail train), there would be no stability penalty.

Evasion

If the target knows that a shot is coming and is on-guard, she can make things a little more difficult for her attacker. Any character in this situation may make a Dodge test at a difficulty of 1 before the attacker makes her Shooting test. For every Boost gained on this test (only count Boosts, not a normal success), the attacker's difficulty to hit is increased by 1. Evading an attack like this comes at a cost to the character, however. She must forfeit any action she is holding, or her ability to act on her next Action Card (even if that card is on a later round). Characters who evade gunshots and succeed at the test may move at the same time, if they have any movement left in the round. Smart characters use this distance to get around a corner, behind a car, or into some other kind of protective cover. Characters who don't have cover within range usually

smuggled out of police possession and sold on the black market. Some very elite private security companies are bonded to allow their people to carry firearms. Most often, though guns are found in the hands of influential yet subversive people who have little or no moral qualms about using deadly force against any person who becomes an inconvenience (band managers, mostly).

The Hand of The Man

The modifiers listed here are the most common circumstances that will come up in combat. A comprehensive list of everything that can possibly affect an attack would be at least as long as this book, if not longer. So The Man may impose a penalty or bonus to an attack if he thinks it would make sense. If a character accidentally wounded a bystander the last time she pulled a gun in anger, for instance, he may decide to increase the difficulty because of her shaky nerves.

just dive against the ground (and thus get the benefit of being prone as long as they stay down.

Prone

Trying to hit a target that is lying down (prone) is considerably more difficult. Add 2 to the difficulty to hit a prone person. This penalty can be eliminated if the attacker is within 4 yards of the target. If a prone character gets up, reduce her movement for that round by half.

Cover

Standing behind something while being shot at is generally a good idea. Shooting at a target that is partially covered by an effectively bulletproof obstacle (brick walls are a traditional favorite) is much harder, depending on how much of the target is covered. Cover over less than half the target's body (such as just the legs) increases the difficulty by 1. Cover of more than half the body, but less than three-quarters (such as cover from mid-chest down) incurs a penalty of +2 for the firer. If more than three-quarters of the target is covered, but some part of her is still visible, the attacker suffers a +3 penalty to hit.

Concealment

When there isn't any bulletproof cover just lying around, a good idea is to look for something that's much less durable, but just as opaque (such as bushes, tear gas or thin walls). The less of you an attacker can see, the better your chances of survival. Targets that have more than half their bodies concealed add one to the difficulty to hit. If more than three-quarters are covered, the shot has +2 to the difficulty, and if a target is completely hidden (but the attacker still knows where it is), the attack can be made at a +3 difficulty. The difficulty penalty for concealment is not cumulative with the penalty for bulletproof cover.

Darkness

It's no coincidence that almost every assassinated rocker gets killed onstage–hitting someone under the spotlights is just so much easier. If the target is in light equal to a sunset, sunrise, or shadows, the attacker has +1 to the difficulty to hit. In light equal to a full moon, the difficulty increases by 2, and in near-total darkness, difficulties go up by 3. Penalties for darkness and concealment together can never total more than 3. There isn't much point in hiding when an attacker can't see you anyway.

Aiming

Taking extra time to line up a shot can reduce the effects of some of these penalties. By spending an extra phase on a shot, the attacker can eliminate one level of penalty from a moving target, called shot, cover, or darkness. Characters can spend a total of five phases aiming a single shot (they could actually

choose to spend more time aiming, but the benefits stop after the first five). Taking time to aim a shot doesn't require any more Action Cards; it only adds phases to the Preparation time of the attack.

Guns and Timing

Guns bring up a lot of questions about the timing of actions. Because a single shot can kill or permanently injure a character, the exact order that everything happens can be very important. Remember that all actions that happen in a phase happen simultaneously, regardless of when those actions were declared. So, if a character spends two phases aiming her shot, she will pull the trigger at the same time that a character who just haphazardly pulled the trigger without being so careful. This can lead to a lot of standoff situations, where a roomful of characters can all shoot each other at the same time. Players should consider themselves warned: a gun is not a toy.

Drawing

Characters will most likely begin a fight with their guns stuck away in a holster somewhere on their body. Drawing a gun adds phases to the Preparation time of the attack, but doesn't require any extra actions on the part of the character. Hip or shoulder holsters (the kind used most often by cops with their legal weapons) add one to the preparation time for the attack. Concealed holsters (in the small of the back or at the ankle) add two. Guns that are hidden away somewhere else can take even longer. Carrying a gun around in a backpack or guitar case isn't wise, if you think you are going to need it quickly.

Automatic Fire

Though rare, fully automatic guns are available to people with the right connections. Police gun squads bring them out when dealing with unruly crowds (usually with riot guns or other non-lethal weapons), and crime syndicates use automatics when they want to send a very clear message. Even with a lot of connections, though, player characters will almost never get their hands on them, and hopefully will never even see them in operation.

Rate of Fire

The Rate of Fire (or RoF) of a gun is the number of bullets it can fire in a single phase. The Rate of Fire of a semiautomatic gun is 1. Full automatics are fired in bursts of three bullets each (so their RoF is always a multiple of three).

When firing an automatic, the attacker can choose to either fire a single shot or the weapon's full rate of fire. For single-shot firing, just treat the attack like any other. But firing a continuous stream of lead can be quite different.

An attacker can only fire full-auto twice per round, regardless of how many of her Action Cards come up. Even in the fastest of guns, the bullets can't come out all at once, and two automatic attacks effectively take up the entire round.

Choosing Targets

Automatic weapons are the police favorite for crowd or riot control, because one burst can hit a lot of people. An attacker can choose as many targets as she has shots in her RoF, with a few restrictions. First, the targets must all be to her front and relatively close together (no more than six feet apart for every ten yards of range). The attacker fires in a straight line, from left to right or vice versa. If she doesn't hit with every bullet fired, the first targets she picked get hit, while the remaining bullets miss. Also, bullets that miss don't just vanish. Bystanders run the risk of getting shot by stray bullets; this is why automatic weapons are used rarely by the cops, and only in situations where (at least, in the cop mindset) no one is innocent, like rock concerts and peace protests.

The Road to Recovery

After the fight, once you've been either left for dead or managed to run to safety, you have a long, painful couple weeks ahead of you. Getting rid of Fatigue is simple enough. A full night's sleep (that's eight hours for Earthlings, four for Starchildren) will eliminate all the Fatigue a character has racked up. Wounds are another matter, though. Every week, a wounded character recovers five wounds. Additionally, she can make a Body test (difficulty one) to recover more. Success on this test means the character heals five more wounds, plus another five for every Boost.

Recovering from lasting injuries is different. Each injury has its own recovery time. Some even require medical attention in addition to time to heal properly. Some injuries never quite heal right. In

general, the penalties listed for an Injury persist until the character recovers. Any penalties that linger on will be listed in the description of the injury, which is located in Chapter Seven.

Performance

The Revolution is about a lot of things. It's about censorship, it's about freedom, it's about fear and it's about hope. But, above all else, the Revolution is about Rock. Without the music, the Starchildren would never have come across the void to break Earthlings out of their self-built prison. So, naturally, the revolutionaries of the day often find themselves taking to the stage to spread the word of freedom to the masses.

To musician characters, getting onstage and playing music is often its own reward, but fame and recognition are popular fringe benefits. Every time a band gets in front of an audience, they can increase their own fame, impress fans and maybe even change the world, if only for a night.

The Crowd

Of course, there's no point in getting onstage without an audience. The average show sports a crowd of about fifty to a hundred kids, or even more for a well-promoted event. The crowd can either be tough or easy, basically at the whim of The Man. If the crowd is into a different kind of music then what the band is offering, or if they're skittish because of rumors of a pending raid, making a good impression is going to be pretty hard. But, if a band is well-promoted and known, crowd members will be more receptive. Depending on all of these factors, The Man will modify the difficulty of all tests for the gig one or two levels up or down. But the band isn't necessarily going to know how tough the crowd is, so a really tough audience can really ruin an otherwise decent show.

Ready to Rock

Some bands don't bother preparing for a gig. They just jump onstage out of the crowd, pick up their instruments and start playing. If the band is good enough, they can sometimes get away with this. For most groups out there, however, preparation is the key. Getting ready for a gig takes about two hours, and can be done any time on the day of the show. During this time, drummers and guitarists make a Repair test to double-check all their instruments. Keyboardists make Computer tests to tweak the programming of their synthesizers, and singers spend time trying on every piece of clothing they own, making Fashion tests to be sure they look their best for the kids.

The difficulty for all of these tests is one (though it might be higher due to a lack of tools, unfamiliar equipment, or a limited wardrobe). Characters who spend time preparing get Advantage Cards on all tests to play their instruments during that night's show. Succeeding gets the

The Gig

As you might imagine, playing shows in 2073 is a lot different than it was in years past. Gone are the days of one-or-two-band shows. Bands tend to get gigs by doing favors for the concert organizers, and organizers are constantly asking for favors. With the huge number of groups jockeying for stage time at a limited number of concerts, the average show consists of at least five separate bands. Each band rarely has more than a half-hour, just enough time to do about five or six songs, before clearing the stage for the next act.

There are exceptions, as some bands (usually the ones on Mother's Ten Most Wanted List) pull enough influence to get their own shows. Even these are short compared to the arena shows of last century, since not even Megalicious or Samizdat can easily make a crowd forget the threat of an impending raid. While player characters will probably never get to the level of fame where they can manage a show like this, even the really legendary bands need openers. Playing before one of these groups is considered about the biggest honor that a small band will ever get, and there is no greater way to get exposure.

character one Advantage Card, plus an additional one for each Boost gained on the test.

If a character fails the test (or succeeds, but thinks she can do better), she can spend another two hours preparing, and make another test, taking its result instead (even if the second attempt was worse than the first). If a character happens to crash this test, her difficulties don't go up, but she can't try to improve her situation by making another test. They just have to try to make the best of it when the lights come up.

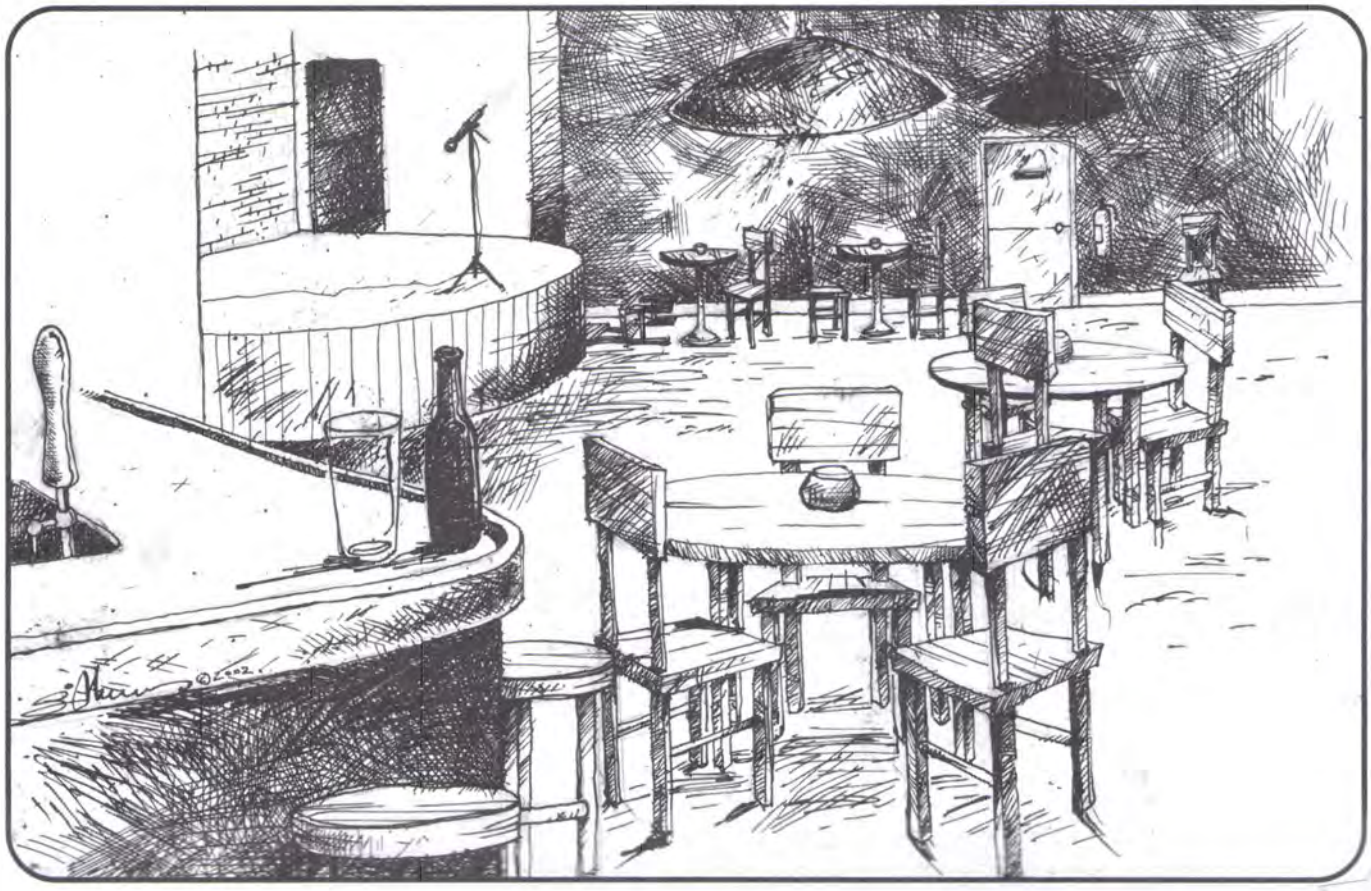
Roadies

This is where having a skilled roadie can really help a band out. Roadies can make all the pre-show tests for the band (using the roadies' skills), if they have the time to spend two full hours on each member. While the average roadie will be good at programming or fixing instruments, it's a rare one that is also equally skilled in the arts of rock & roll glamour. But, should a band be fortunate enough to find such a miracle roadie, the singer can benefit from the assistant's Fashion skill as well.

Taking the Stage

After all this preparation, the band is ready to play the first song of the night. Each song is its own test for the band members. But, rather than The Man assigning a difficulty, the band itself decides how hard they want each song to be. The players should just come to some sort of consensus before each test and pick a difficulty between one and five. The harder the test is, the more the band stands to gain by succeeding. An easy test means the characters will probably succeed, but even a high number of boosts won't do much to please the crowd. The Man has all the details and numbers behind the scenes. What players need to know is this: don't expect playing a good gig to be easy. If you play all your songs at the easiest possible difficulty, no one will remember you after you've left the stage.

After the band decides on how tough they want the song to be, The Man modifies the difficulty by the crowd's attitude, and proceeds to do the test. This is a secret group test, so the players don't even get to know how many cards The Man draws. All players play cards at the same time. If a single member of the band fails or Crashes on the test, the whole band



goes with her. If everyone gets at least a success, The Man takes the highest card played and notes how many Boosts (if any) she got. Because this is a secret test, The Man doesn't have to reveal his card, but should tell the players whether they, as a band, succeeded, failed, or got boosts or crashes. The Man has the details on what each of these mean for the band, but should give the characters a general indication of how their gig is going.

Repeat testing like this once for every song the band plays. Before each song, the band can choose to change the difficulty of the test. If the band is failing on a lot of songs, it's a good idea to play at a lower difficulty. If they're getting a lot of Boosts, they might want to consider pushing it.

After the last song, The Man looks over how the band did on each song, and tells the players whether the gig was an overall success. The band can either gain or lose Fame, but more importantly, their actions onstage might inspire some audience members to support the Revolution more actively. Over time, a dedicated band can do more to fight the Ministry with music than anyone can with violence.

Mojo

Ever since the Starchildren arrived on the scene, the burgeoning music scene has been wild with rumors of alien co-conspirators come to aid the cause with their mystical powers. The few Earthlings who have gotten close to the Starchildren know the truth. The aliens are real, and they do have strange powers, known as Mojo. But Mojo aren't mystical in origin (though they certainly seem that way to unenlightened Earthlings). Rather, every Starchild possesses all three Mojo innately, even if they never fully realize this potential.

The glittering eyes of the Starchildren see no difference between a Mojo and a skill. They learn to control these strange talents just like they learn how to play a guitar. As a Starchild's skill with a Mojo grows, she learns new ways to use her knowledge, and each new use is a bit more powerful than the last one she learned.

Using Tricks

Usually, a Starchild will have to make a test in order to activate a trick. This is always a test of the character's skill with that Mojo, but it might be either a simple or opposed test, depending on the trick. Tricks that require a simple test have a "Difficulty" listing before the text. Tricks that are used directly against another character have an "Opposition" listing instead, followed by an attribute. Starchildren have to succeed at an opposed test of their skill against the subject's attribute to activate these tricks. If a trick's Difficulty or Opposition is listed as "special," read the full text description to find out how tough it is to do. If a trick lists neither a difficulty nor an opposition attribute, it requires no test to use.

Tricks also list Preparation times, which range from Instant up to several hours. Treat this just like a Preparation listing for a weapon (see Violence, above). A Starchild must concentrate for this long before even making the test to see if a trick succeeds. If she fails, she has to start all over again.

Flex

The Starchildren on Earth have no idea what their ancestors looked like prior to "discovering" signals from the distant planet. What is known is that these ancestors gradually altered their physical bodies to resemble the beings they saw in these messages. In 2073, the Starchildren are as comfortable in their humanoid form as authentic Earthlings. However, their species' talent for body modification still has a number of uses, both cosmetic and otherwise.

Some applications of Flex have a tendency to damage the user's body. More drastic changes lead to more extensive damage, so radical alterations to one's appearance require long periods of healing between applications (or copious use of Restore, for the more advanced Flexers).

Once a Starchild becomes accustomed to her mutable form, small changes become easy for her to manage. If a character's Flex skill is at least three ranks higher than the trick she is attempting, she can succeed automatically, without making a test (though if she wants to try for a boost, she still has to test).

Shag
Level: Ace
Preparation: 2 phases
Difficulty: Mundane

The earliest manifestation of Flex allows a Starchild to quickly grow her hair and fingernails.

Each use of this ability causes her hair to grow up to 12 inches or fingernails to grow one inch. If she's truly pressed, a Starchild can use Shag-grown fingernails like claws in a fight. Fingernail attacks use the Brawl skill and give the attacker two Advantage Cards. They have a damage code of Body/10 and do stun damage. However, unless the character gets a Boost when attacking, the nails break off and can't be used again until they grow out.

Colorize
Level: 3
Preparation: 1 Minute
Difficulty: See Text

A Starchild can alter the pigmentation of any part of her body (hair, eyes, skin, etc.) with this trick. During the entire preparation time, she must be looking at the color she's altering herself to resemble. Seeing the color is important, since that's how the Starchild's body knows what it's supposed to look like. If the character is trying to create a pattern, she has to be able to shift her attention between every color she wants to reproduce. Some Starchildren that know this trick actually carry around boxes of crayons, so they will never be at a loss for colors to look at.

The more detailed the pattern or marking the Starchild is attempting, the harder it is to succeed. Making your hair bright blue is fairly simple, but creating a "tattoo" of your girlfriend's face on your chest takes a bit more effort. The chart in the sidebar gives the difficulty and ideas for how the body could be colored in.

Colorize

Color Alteration	Difficulty
Solid Color	Foolproof
Color Pattern	Mundane
Dark Lines/Single-Color Tattoos	1
Detailed Images/Multi-Color Tattoos	2

Stopper
Level: 5
Preparation: 1 Phase
Difficulty: 1

Stopper has saved many a "misunderstood" Starchild from serious injury at the hands of aggressors. This trick has two effects. First, the Starchild recovers 5 Fatigue levels, plus 5 for every boost on the test. Second, anyone performing First Aid on the Starchild gets one Advantage Card, plus one for every boost gained on the Mojo test. Using Stopper multiple times doesn't help; any Fatigue left over after the first use has to be eliminated the old-fashioned way.

This trick functions on a practically subconscious level. If a character with this level of Flex Drops Out of a fight, her self-preservation instinct starts up, and she can use this trick even while unconscious.

Thicken
Level: 7
Preparation: 10 minutes
Difficulty: Special

Decades of space travel on the way to Earth left most Starchildren pale, sickly and thin by the time they landed. Those with this level of Flex could make up for the change, while those without it had to pretend they were malnourished orphans or runway models when questioned about their inhuman physique. Though the name of this trick is Thicken, a Starchild can use it to make any alteration to the "soft" tissue of her body (fat, muscle, or cartilage)

First, the bad news: a Starchild using Thicken causes wounds to herself. More drastic changes are not only more difficult, but cause more extensive damage to the Starchild's. These wounds can be healed by any means, either the slow natural way or the accelerated use of Restore (see below).

This makes it easier for her to pass as a different person or even temporarily increase her physical capabilities by adding on more muscle mass. For cosmetic purposes, each 10% change in her weight will give her one Advantage Card on any Fashion test. If used to "bulk up," Thicken grants a Starchild one rank in Body for each 10% alteration (though her Body can't be increased past Queen this way). The extra attribute levels are temporary, however. The

Thicken		
Weight Alteration	Difficulty	Wounds
± 10%	Foolproof	3
± 20%	Mundane	6
± 30%	1	9
± 40%	2	12
± 50%	3	15

Stretch		
Height Alteration	Difficulty	Wounds
± 10%	1	9
± 20%	2	12
± 30%	3	15
± 40%	4	18
± 50%	5	21

only stick around until the damage caused by this trick gets healed.

Restore

Level: 8

Preparation: 10 minutes

Difficulty: See text

Once Starchildren have reached the higher ranks of Flex, they can actually heal wounds on their bodies. Restore requires that the Starchild rest and not exert herself at all while the healing is working. She chooses a number of wounds to heal in a single sitting, which can be spread out anywhere on her body she wishes. The difficulty for the test is the number of wounds the character has taken, divided by five (rounded up). The healing process takes ten minutes, regardless of the number of wounds being healed. Restore is never used without caution, however, because if a Starchild crashes the test, she can't try to heal herself again; her wounds will have to return at the natural rate.

Stretch

Level: 9

Preparation: 1 hour

Difficulty: Special

The sister of Thicken, Stretch allows a Starchild to alter her own bones. This is usually used to enhance effects of Thicken, and, in combination, can make a Starchild look like a totally new person. Like Thicken, drastic changes cause damage to the user. Apply the number of wounds from the chart below to any character using Stretch. However, there is a lighter side to this: when used in tandem with Thicken, this trick only causes half the usual number of wounds to the Starchild, and negates all damage caused by Thicken.

Evolve

Level: Jack

Preparation: 24 hours

Difficulty: 3

The internal organs of Earthlings are mostly a mystery to the Starchildren. Needing only to consume a small amount of liquid nourishment, they have extremely limited digestive systems. The systems that Starchildren have an everyday use for (heart, lungs, and some reproductive bits) are easy enough to figure out, but some Starchildren just get plain bored with a body that operates the same way, day in and day out. It is for those Starchildren that Evolve exists. Its potential applications are almost limitless, but are always restricted by the user's knowledge of biology. There have been rare instances in which a Starchild has acquired this trick without the necessary education into bodies' functions, and caused herself to no longer be able to breathe oxygen or pump blood. These sad stories serve as a warning to those who would rush into psychic self-surgery without caution.

That said, particularly unusual uses of this trick (anything outside "normal" Starchild or Earthling physiology) should be preceded by a test of Knowl-

edge (Biology) or the Starchild risks becoming one of these poor fools whose bodies shut down and can't get started again. Characters that don't make the initial Biology test have to succeed at their Flex test with two Boosts or automatically take 3 permanent injuries to the torso. Essentially, Evolve lets you shape the clay; it doesn't make you a sculptor.

A Starchild could use this trick to emulate any organic function she can understand, from developing eyes like a cat's to growing gills on her neck to breathe underwater. Though they have this capability, the only species that the Starchildren want to emulate is *Homo sapiens.*

Many Starchildren are still getting used to the idea of two separate genders, and remain indecisive about which they want to be more. Using Evolve to change gender completely (from 100% male to 100% female) requires a test of Flex at difficulty of 3. For a partial alteration (don't ask for details), the difficulty is only 2. To make the change final, the Starchild must also use both Thicken and Stretch to make 10% alterations to their bone and muscle structure. By the time this process is finished, the Starchild looks like a completely different person.

Regenerate
Level: Queen
Preparation: 1 hour
Difficulty: 5

The masters of Flex can rapidly heal even severe injuries to their bodies. A Starchild who reaches the highest level of skill in this Mojo can remove one injury (except, of course, death) per use of Regenerate. As with Restore, she must be completely still and motionless while this is occurring, during which time bones heal, concussions vanish, and even completely severed limbs grow back at a rapid rate.

Sparkle

When the Starchildren received the Earthly signals that brought them rock & roll, they didn't use televisions or radios to pick up the broadcast. Instead, they heard the music in their heads, using aspects of this Mojo. Sparkle allows a Starchild to sense different forms of light, including ultraviolet, infrared and radio waves. At higher levels, she can even manipulate light, creating lightshows and illusions.

Gleam
Level: Ace
Preparation: 30 seconds

A Starchild using Gleam becomes extremely sensitive to low levels of visible, infrared and ultraviolet light. This allows her to see in any conditions short of complete darkness (which is a rare thing in the modern world). The main drawback to Gleam is that a character loses her ability to distinguish colors whenever she uses it.

Bask
Level: 3
Preparation: 1 minute
Difficulty: 2

At this level of Sparkle, the Starchild can have "eyes in the back of her head." She could also have

them on her neck, shoulder, knee or anywhere else she wants. When activated, Bask allows the Starchild to see with her skin just as well as her eyes. She gains 360° vision, as long as her skin isn't completely covered. For as long as the trick stays active, she gains Advantage Cards on all Alertness and Search tests equal to the number of boosts she gained on the Sparkle test.

Lightshow
Level: 5
Preparation: 5 seconds
Difficulty: Mundane

Lightshow allows a Starchild to create her own light, rather than just looking at other peoples' shows. She can create beams of light, pyrotechnic displays, floating glowing globes, or any light source she wishes in any color she can imagine. The intensity of the light can be as low as a single candle flame or as bright as a stage light. The only limitation is that her light cannot take a convincing shape or flare up enough to blind a person (that's what Visions and Dazzle are for).

Interference
Level: 7
Preparation: 0
Difficulty: 2

All Ministry-approved music is carried on the airwaves, since the public can't be trusted to own recordings. Cops use radio communicators to call for backup when faced with rocker activity. As much as the Starchildren loved Earth's radio broadcasts a century ago, in 2073 they can sometimes be a problem. So Starchildren sometimes will want to just shut it all down. A Starchild with this trick can emit a chaotic mess of radio waves on all frequencies, rendering useless any transmitter or receiver within fifty yards of herself. Each boost on her Sparkle test increases this area of effect by another 20 yards. A Starchild can maintain Interference for as long as she can concentrate on doing so, keeping her eyes clenched shut. If she has to make a test or takes any damage while maintaining, the Interference ends.

Visions
Level: 8
Preparation: 10 seconds
Difficulty: see below

With this level of Sparkle, the Starchild's control over light is complete enough that she can craft believable images out of it. Used correctly, this can fool others with "illusions," falsify identification, or just put on an interesting show for the audience. The difficulty of the test is based on the complexity of the Vision; a static object that doesn't move at all has a difficulty of 2, while flexible or moving images require a Sparkle test at 3 (or higher, at The Man's discretion). Visions have no mass, so they can't be picked up, carried or otherwise manipulated. Of course, a Starchild can control the movement of a Vision she created, so she could make it look like she was carrying something around. But if someone tried to grab it away from her, their hand would pass right through the image.

Penetration
Level: 9
Preparation: 10 seconds

The Starchild can now sense the extreme ends of the spectrum, allowing her vision to penetrate solid objects. By "tuning" her vision into these areas, she can see through up to a foot of most materials, or up to an inch through heavy metals like lead or gold. As with Gleam, she forfeits any ability to perceive color while using trick. Objects appear in shades of gray, with dense things (metals, etc.) showing up dark and bold, while lighter objects (such as people) appear faint.

Because this trick makes a character sensitive to things like radio waves, it can also be used to pick up on transmissions. This isn't nearly as useful as it sounds to the Starchildren on Earth, because almost every radio transmission in 2073 is digitally encoded and is completely incomprehensible. This application is worth mentioning, however, because it is what allowed the aliens to tune in to Earth's radio broadcasts a century ago, and inspired them to come here.

Dazzle
Level: Jack
Preparation: 0
Opposition: Perception

Starchildren with high levels of Sparkle can create a short, very intense burst of visible light. This light comes on without much warning, and is bright enough to temporarily impede the vision of anyone viewing the flash. All those looking at the flash

(which appears within three feet of the user) must make an Opposed Perception test. Those that fail are blinded, lasting two seconds (or one round in combat). Every boost the Starchild gains on the test causes targets to be blinded for one additional round. Blinded characters count as traumatized for combat purposes.

Transparency
Level: Queen
Preparation: 1 minute
Difficulty: 2

At this level, the Starchild can cause light to slip around her, basically making her invisible. She is effectively impossible to detect through any means that involves light (radar, x-rays, infrared). Using this trick requires a great deal of concentration, and Starchildren can only maintain it until they have to make any test, whether they initiate it or not.

Vibe

Humanity's fascination with the Starchildren doesn't just come from the fact that they're so pretty. Vibe tends to play a part as well. This Mojo allows a Starchild to reach out and affect another person's mind. This could mean reading someone's thoughts, communicating telepathically or even dominating their body completely.

Scan
Level: Ace
Preparation: 10 seconds
Difficulty: 1

Scan allows a Starchild to sense other conscious minds in her vicinity. Success on the test allows her to note the location of any minds in a 5-yard radius. The radius of the scan increases by 5 yards for every boost she gains on the test as well.

Broadcast
Level: 3
Preparation: 5 seconds
Opposition: Will

Broadcast opens up a two-way channel between the Starchild's mind and the subject's. Either one can choose to communicate mentally with the other. Once this contact is established, it remains as long as the Starchild can continue concentrating on it, regardless of the distance to the receiver. The activation test is only necessary if the subject wants to resist the Starchild's intrusion.

Tune In
Level: 5
Preparation: 5 seconds
Opposition: Will

This allows the Starchild to listen in on the surface thoughts of another person. This mental link allows the eavesdropper one Advantage Card on any Detect Lies test against the subject, plus one for every

The Power of Rock

Mad Mother has always said that rock music can influence the mind in unwholesome ways. Ironically, the arrival of the Starchildren proved this correct (partly). Having spent almost a century doing nothing but perfecting rock & roll, the aliens learned how to use music to open peoples' minds. With just the right combination of notes, a Starchild with Vibe can cause anyone listening to her music "tune in" and become receptive to her contact.

Normally, any mental manipulation done with Vibe can only affect a single subject. But if a Starchild is playing (or singing) and gets a boost on her test, she can affect one-third of her audience with Vibe as if they were a single mind. Each adidtional boost on the performance test opens up another third of the listeners.

For small audiences, this can be handled as a group test between the Starchild and anyone affected by her music. With a larger number of listeners (such as in a concert), the effects are best handled through narration by The Man.

boost she gained on the Mojo test. Players will likely come up with some innovative applications of this trick, so The Man should be prepared to improvise if need be.

Telesense
Level: 7
Preparation: 10 seconds
Opposition: Perception

This allows the exchange of sensory information between the Starchild and a subject. The Starchild can either tap into one of the subject's senses, or she can impose one of her own senses on the recipient's mind. Every boost on the Mojo test allows the Starchild to transfer one additional sense

Mood Swings
Level: 8
Preparation: 1 minute
Opposition: Will

This level of Vibe allows a Starchild to mold another person's emotions like clay. If the Starchild's test is successful, she can inspire a single emotion in the target. This could be anger, love, jealousy, adoration, lust, sadness, or anything else the Starchild wishes. If the Starchild gets a boost in the test, the target's emotions will even overpower his reason, causing him to do things he never would have otherwise.

Jolt
Level: 9
Preparation: 3 phases
Opposition: Will

This is the most directly offensive trick a Starchild can learn. At this level, the Starchild can force psychic "static" onto a person's mind in an effort to shut it down temporarily. She first has to make an opposed test of her Vibe against the target's Will. If the test is successful, the target takes ten levels of Fatigue damage. If the Starchild gets a boost on the test, the target falls unconscious immediately. Victims of this trick wake up normally in an hour with a slight headache, but no major lasting effects.

Rummage
Level: Jack
Preparation: 10 minutes
Opposition: Will

Starchildren that have this level of Vibe try not to let Earthlings know that this trick exists; it would raise a lot of suspicions, especially among the privacy-conscious revolutionary movement. Rummage allows a Starchild to dig around in the darkest corners of a person's mind, and to pull out memories. She can probe for a single event, point in time, or fact within the target's long-term memory. Once a Starchild has found what she's looking for, she experiences the memory exactly as the target recalls it. Some Starchildren have been forever changed after experiencing someone else's traumatic memories, so this is not an ability to use lightly.

Merge
Level: Queen
Preparation: 10 minutes
Opposition: Presence

By the times she learns this level of Vibe, a Starchild has spent so much time inside other peoples' heads that she can temporarily make herself at

home there. A successful test for this trick allows a Starchild to "possess" another person. Basically, the Starchild "moves in," taking control of the subject's body, seeing from her point of view, etc. The subject's mind goes into an unconscious state similar to very deep sleep while the Starchild is in control, and will not remember anything from the incident.

In rules terms, The Starchild assumes all physical attributes of the subject, but keeps her own mental attributes and all of her skills while inhabiting someone else's body. A Starchild can maintain control for two hours on a successful Vibe test. Every boost gains increases the duration by another hour.

Should a Starchild crash this test, she mingles minds with her target briefly, then the target forcibly ejects her. In this process, the Starchild and target might end up exchanging a few minor personality quirks. A Starchild might end up acquiring a taste for a particular food, affection for a person or common phrase from the mind that kicked her out of its skull, just as the target might acquire quirks from her.

Socializing

Whether you're doing contract negotiations, facing down an angry hooligan in a bar, or trying to convince a cop why you're carrying a suspiciously guitar-shaped case out of a dark alley, it pays to have some "people skills." This section explains how to handle certain social situations with the rules (and, equally important, when to leave the rules out of it).

Most social situations can be handled without needing to resort to using cards. Characters simply sitting around having a chat can simply talk it out. These rules are mainly used for situations that The Man decides can't (or don't need to) be roleplayed out in their entirety. For instance, if the band is sitting across the table from a record scout, it's not necessary to play through hours of negotiations word-for-word. Likewise, if one character is manipulating another, sometimes a test is necessary.

Roleplaying and tests can be combined for a scene as well. A good way of doing this is to have the involved characters roleplay a minute or two of their interaction, and make tests afterward. The Man can award Advantage Cards to a character that roleplays her part particularly well. In any case, player characters should never make these sorts of tests against one another. Rather, social situations between these characters should be roleplayed out.

Blending In

Often, talking to someone with a drastically different lifestyle can be as hard as if they spoke a different language. Even still, some people manage to excel at getting their point across no matter whom they're dealing with. The key to this talent is the Blend skill. Whenever a character is interacting with someone from a different social class or (sub) culture and would normally be making a test of her Persuade, Negotiate or Seduce skills, her skill rank counts as either the actual rank or her Blend skill, whichever is lower.

Negotiation

When two characters are trying to work out any sort of deal or agreement, each one starts by listing his or her terms. These are the goals that each would like to result from the negotiation. If the terms are fairly balanced, there is no problem. Otherwise, The Man can give Advantage Cards to the side that states the more reasonable terms. Then, the two sides make an opposed Negotiate test. If one side does well enough to gain a boost on the other, that side gets exactly the terms they asked for. If the winner succeeds without a boost, they get what they asked for, but the other side gets half of what they want as well (obviously, this situation will require some adjudication from The Man).

Haggling

There are many similarities between used car salesmen and drug dealers. Besides their excellent fashion sense and tastes in pornography, all are also excellent at haggling over prices. Characters in this game will likely have to do the same if they pursue any sort of illegal or illicit goods. First, the seller names an asking price. Usually, this price is going to be quite high, since even the best salesman expects to get talked down a little. The buyer and seller then engage in an exchange of offers and counteroffers, trying to agree on a price. The two make an opposed Persuade test. If the buyer succeeds, she can buy the item at 20% less than the asking price. For every boost the buyer can gain, the price drops by another 10%.

Lying/Fast-Talking

Sometimes, you just have to tell those little white lies that make life easier without hurting anyone. And sometimes, you have to tell those really vicious lies that let you get away with murder while putting the blame on some poor innocent bystander. Whether you get away with it depends on your Bluff skill. Whether people get away with lying to you depends on how good your Detect Lies is.

In the course of roleplaying a conversation, if a character suspects that someone is lying to her, she can call for an opposed test of her Detect Lies skill against the speaker's Bluff. This is always done as a secret test, so characters won't always be able to trust the results. Also, one test can only be applied to a single statement, so truly paranoid players that insist on analyzing every conversation for deception are going to run out of good cards quickly. How well the listener can sort out fact from fiction depends on whether she succeeds, fails, crashes or boosts on the test. The chart in the sidebar shows this in detail. Remember that since this is a secret test, the listener won't necessarily know whether she succeeded or not.

Lying Results

Outcome of Detect Lies Test.	Result
Listener succeeds with a boost	Listener knows absolutely whether the speaker is lying.
Listener succeeds, but doesn't get a boost	Listener isn't completely convinced, but her suspicions are correct.
Listener fails, but doesn't crash	Listener isn't sure, but her suspicions are incorrect
Listener crashes	If the speaker was lying, the listener believes she is telling the truth. If the speaker was telling the truth, the listener is convinced it was a lie.

Intimidation

It's been said that you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar, but when you're out of honey, you've got to use something. Intimidation is all about using fear to get what you want. This system doesn't necessarily cover direct threats of physical harm (that has to be handled with in-character roleplaying), but the more subtle ways of scaring people into "behaving." The aggressor simply has to make an opposed test of her Intimidate skill against the victim's Guts. If the victim loses the test, she makes sure to be as polite as possible to the aggressor, but will likely try to get away from her as soon as possible.

Hide-and-Seek

Living under the nose of Mad Mother inevitably requires a lot of hiding, concealment and sneaking around. It's also good to know when someone's doing the same to you.

Alertness vs. Search

When trying to spot something (or someone) that is hidden, characters will test either their Search or Alertness skills. The difference between the two is slight, but makes a big difference in how they are used. When a character is actively looking for something out of the ordinary, she makes a Search test. If the test succeeds, she finds what she was looking for, or at least realizes that it isn't there. Alertness, on the other hand, is a much more general skill, used when characters aren't even expecting anything out of the ordinary. Someone walking down a street oblivious to someone sneaking up behind her gets to make an Alertness test to see if she notices. But the information a spotter gets when using Alertness is extremely vague. Usually, a success on Alertness means the character knows that "something is wrong," but has no idea what. Obviously, once she succeeds on the

Alertness test, she is free to make a Search test to follow up, but by then, it may be too late.

For the rules in this section, these two skills are effectively interchangeable, depending on the situation. Whenever the rules refer to a character's "spotting skill," use whichever of these skills is most appropriate.

Anyone trying to find the item has to make a test of their spotting skill (again, either Search or Alertness) to overcome the original Conceal test (the difficulty is one, plus one for every boost on the original Conceal test).

Sneaking

Characters trying not to be seen should have good ranks in the Sneak skill and Agility attribute, or they won't get very far. Sneaking is always done as a secret test. Characters never really know if they've been spotted (unless the spotter gives it away), and someone looking out won't know anything is there unless she succeeds. A character trying to sneak has to succeed at an opposed test of her Sneak skill against the spotting skill of any potential observers. If there is more than one character that may notice, carry this out as a group test. If the sneaking character succeeds, she can move the distance she can move around for the equivalent of an entire round (two seconds) without being found, as long as she doesn't do anything blatant to give herself away. Various circumstances can modify the test for sneaking around, giving Advantage Cards to either side.

Concealing Items

Weapons, drugs, music tapes...Members of the Velvet Generation have a lot to hide. When a character stashes something with the hope of it staying well hidden, she has to make a Conceal test. The difficulty of the Conceal test is based on its size. The equipment descriptions at the end of this chapter have an entry for "bulk" on some musical gear and weapons. When trying to stash such an item, bulk is the difficulty for your Conceal test.

Learning Experiences

Spending any time at all in the Rock underground, you're bound to learn a few things. You have to pick up on the basic facts, like where the beat cops patrol, which bars are safe, and who you can trust to deliver a brand-new Japanese model six-string. Players can handle this accumulation of information on their own, roleplaying their characters as time goes on. But it's also necessary to adapt, learning new skills and getting better at what you already know. For this purpose, characters gain experience points.

The Man should award each player a number of experience points at the end of each game session. For the most part, The Man hands out points based on how a player roleplayed in the game. The Man should end up giving about three experience points per session to each player that he thinks did well that night. If he gives you more, then you're obviously doing something right. If you get less, you're probably not his favorite person in the world that day.

Players can use experience points to increase their ranks in skills and attributes. Edges can't be increased or bought with points, though characters may acquire them through roleplaying (such as meeting new contacts or getting a recording contract).

Picking up a new skill is simple. A player just has to spend a single experience point, and her character gets a rank of Ace in any skill she didn't have before. But characters can only gain one new skill per session,

unless The Man makes an exception for particular circumstances.

To raise a skill that the character already has ranks in, the player first chooses how many of her accumulated experience points she wants to spend, and what skill she wants to increase. For each experience point she spends, the player draws one card from a freshly-shuffled deck. If at least one of the cards she draws is higher than the character's current rank in the skill or a Joker, the character's skill improves by one rank. If all the cards are equal to or lower, she has to wait until next game session to try improving that skill.

Attribute ranks are a bit harder to increase. The method is the same as for skills, but a player has to spend three points for each card she wants to draw. This ends up being very expensive, but it's usually worth it because attributes are used far more often than skills.

Players have to commit to spending a certain number of experience before drawing any cards. If the first attempt to raise a skill or attribute fails, then the player has to wait until the end of the next game session to start again.

Players choose whether to spend experience points at the end of any game session, as long as The Man approves. He might decide not to let a player spend points if he feels she's been gaining ranks too quickly in that skill or attribute, or if it's unreasonable that the events of the session would cause her to improve in that area (getting into a running gunfight with the police is not a good way to learn how to play the piano, for example).

Drugs

Rock music and drugs have been intertwined since before the first chords were played on an electric guitar. This is only more true in 2073, when illegal drugs and illegal music are distributed by the same people, in the same back alleys. Drug use isn't necessary to make music, but it's a common vice among rockers and fans. Even bands that never use drugs have to deal with the same black marketeers that sell them in order to get their music onto the streets.

The streets of 2073 offer a range of recreational pharmaceuticals for the streetwise shopper. Some are improved variations on old themes, but the "classics" are still out there. These are the drugs that people have been using for centuries, and that aren't likely to go away anytime soon. Check out the Equipment section at the end of this chapter to find a list of available drugs and their descriptions

The Hit

Most drugs start to work on a user as soon as they get into her blood and circulate through her body. This can take a couple seconds or up to a half hour, depending on the drug and how the character ingested it. Usually, a drug that gets in through the nose or a vein will take effect immediately, while pills have to get dissolved over a period of 20-30 minutes. Either way, the drug's effects are going to hit the user soon.

When a drug gets into full swing, it's going to have a few distinct effects on the character. These effects are called "tweaks," and can be positive or negative, weak or strong, depending on exactly what chemicals are involved. A tweak can raise or lower one of a character's attributes temporarily, or might be more extreme, leading to addiction or causing seizures. Some tweaks (like euphoria and irritability) are roleplaying effects, and won't affect a character's game statistics at all.

A character that takes a normal dosage of a drug will be affected by all the tweaks listed under "effects" in that drug's description. If she's lucky, that's all that's she's going to get. If not, she might be in trouble.

When a character takes a dose of anything that's potentially harmful, she has to make an Iron Stomach test to shake off the worst effects of the drug. The difficulty of this test is the potency of the drug (which is listed in the drug's description). If a drug doesn't have a potency listed, then characters don't need to make Iron Stomach tests after using it.

Any character that fails her Iron Stomach test is in for a bad night. Her body reacts to the drug in a bad way. Besides the drug's regular effects, the poor character suffers from all the tweaks listed as side effects. Should a character be unlucky enough to crash on her Iron Stomach test, she has to endure the tweaks listed under Overdose in the drug profile.

Tweaks

Addiction

If the anti-drug public service announcements put out by the Ministries were correct, every drug

would instantly turn a user into a hopeless junkie. Fortunately, those commercials are gross exaggerations of the truth. Even drugs that can make a user physically dependent only do so through prolonged, regular use. When this tweak appears in a drug profile, it is always followed by a difficulty level. Every time a character uses the drug, she has to make a Will test against this difficulty. Only if she crashes on this test does the addiction take hold.

As long as a user can go without crashing the Will test, she can remain free of physical dependency. Since the difficulty level is usually quite low, this isn't very hard to do. The only catch is that this difficulty goes up one level for every consecutive day the character has taken the drug. (For example, a character that tries The Machine for the first time has to make her Will test against a difficulty 2 or become a "dabbler." This test is easy to pass, but if she partakes in the drug again the next day, her Will test will be at difficulty 3, and so on. If she keeps it up, using every day, she's eventually going to crash.)

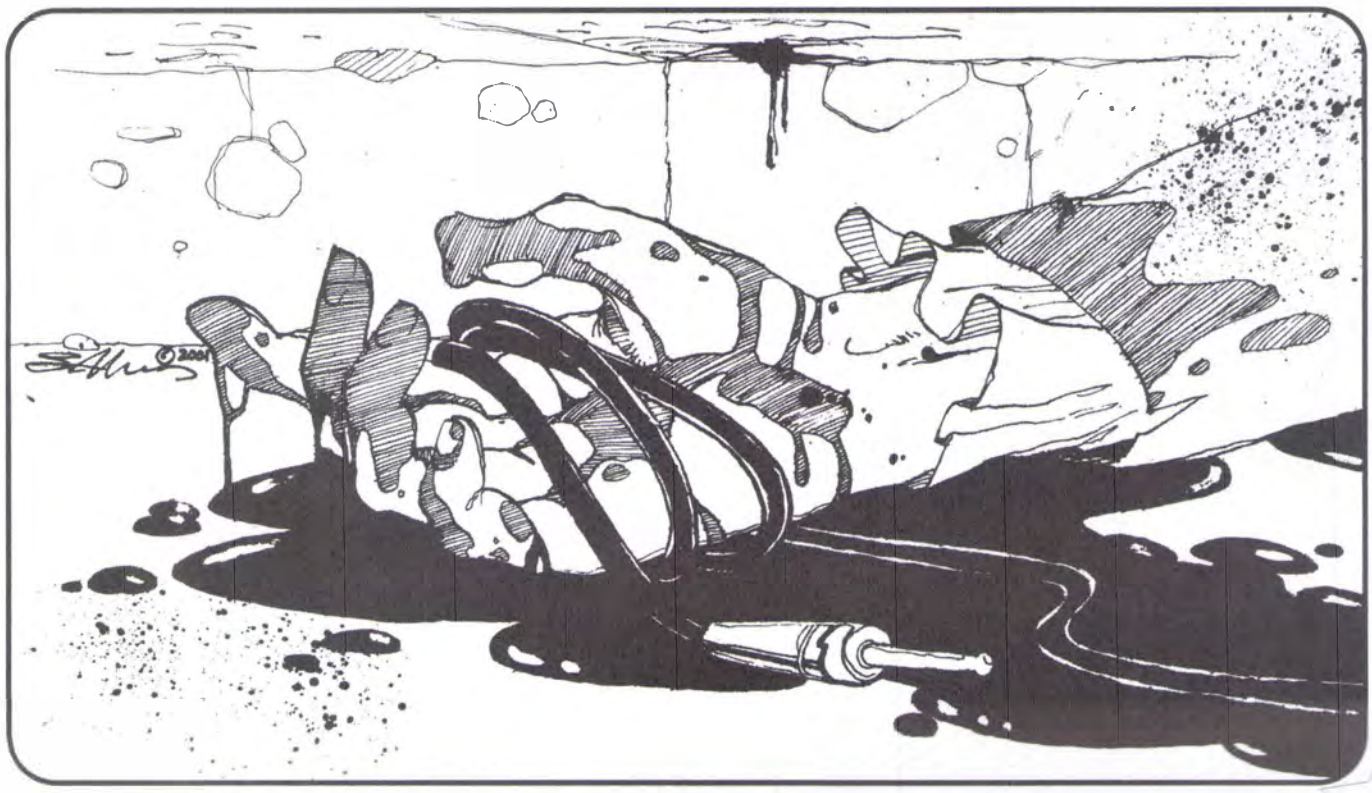
Addictions come in three levels: dabbler, fiend and junkie. When a character crashes an addiction test, she moves one level up this hierarchy. Dabblers only feel a need to use their drug of choice when they are stressed-out or when they see someone else using; otherwise, dabblers can get along just fine. If a dabbler manages to go five weeks without partaking of the drug (which means avoiding all stress, as well as other users), her addiction will fade away.

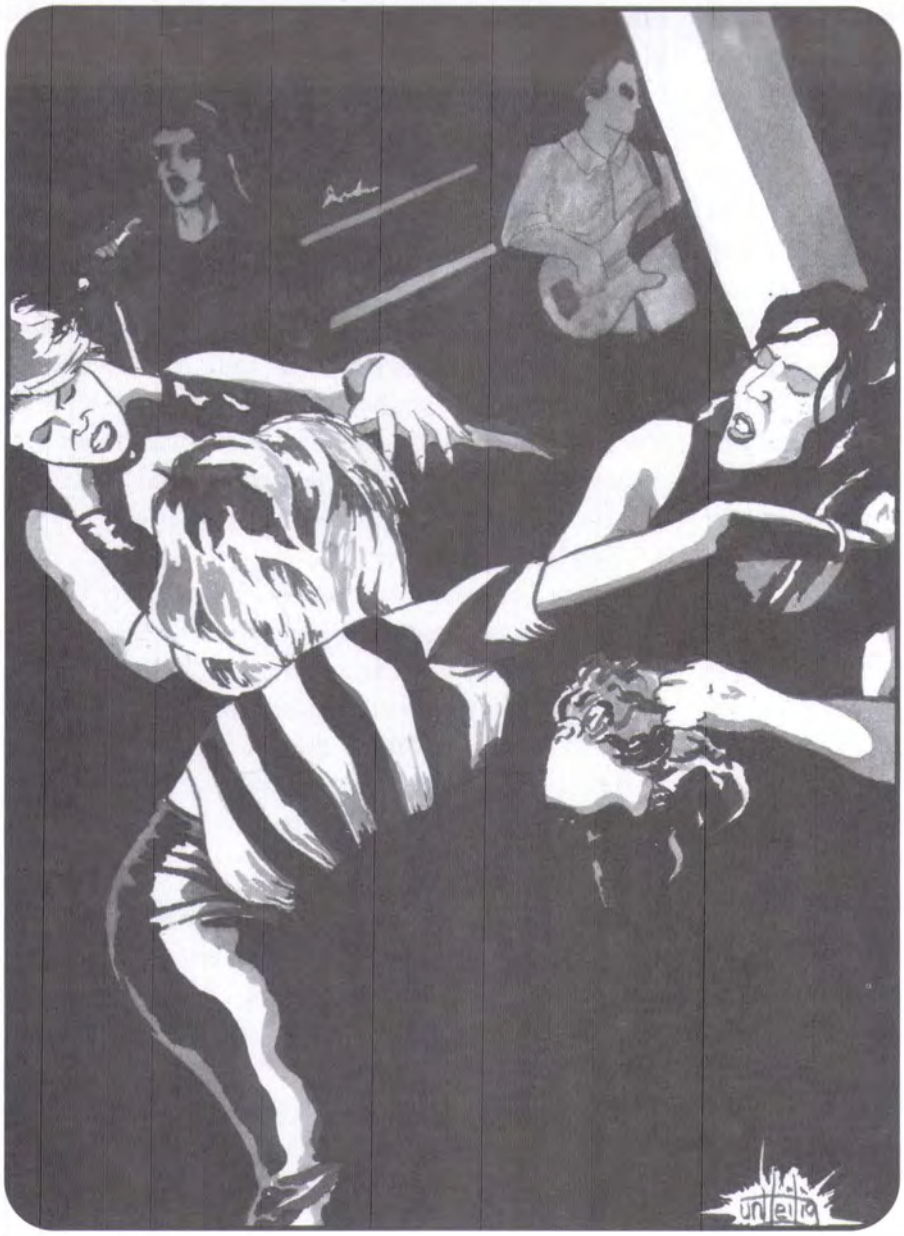
A fiend is someone who's definitely headed downhill. Not only does she feel the same need as a dabbler, but she also uses the drug for the drug's sake. Fiends have to get a fix at least twice a week, or they suffer withdrawal symptoms. Their Body, Speed and Appearance attributes drop one rank for every week they go without, but they also get a chance to break their addiction. For each week of withdrawals, a character can make a Guts test at difficulty 3. If she can succeed at five of these tests in a row, she goes back to being a dabbler.

Once a character reaches the final stage of addiction, the drug is almost the only thing she cares about. She will give up almost anything in order to score. There are no rules for breaking an addiction at this level. If a character that's this far gone is ever going to recover, the only way to do it is with intense role-playing within the game group.

Attribute Boost

A lot of drugs have the ability to make a user feel faster, stronger, smarter or prettier, but a few actually can augment someone's abilities. Drugs with this





tweak will list an attribute and a positive modifier (such as Speed+2). As long as the chemical is at work on a character, her attribute counts as if it were that many ranks higher. No attribute can ever count higher than Queen, however.

Attribute Drain

It's much more common for a user's faculties to be decreased by a drug than increased. This tweak works in precisely the opposite way as an attribute boost. Decrease the listed attribute by the appropriate number of ranks for the duration of the drug's effects.

Blackout

Characters that suffer this result simply lose all consciousness, and will stay that way through almost any attempt to wake her. Unless her friends have access to a high-powered shock truncheon, the only way they can help is to turn her onto her side on the kitchen floor.

Euphoric

Some people will put up with just about anything from a drug that promises to make them happy. This tweak puts a user on her own little cloud, and she couldn't care less about the dreary old world she leaves behind.

Furious

Stimulants like Ball Lightning and The Machine are notorious for the rages they sometimes cause in users. When a character suffers from fury, she will lash out physically against anything that gets in her way. Any of her friends that choose to stick around at this point do so at their own risk.

Impervious

Characters under the effect of this tweak tend to think they're indestructible. The drug deadens the character's pain reception to the point where she doesn't suffer from being traumatized and doesn't drop out because of damage inflicted in a fight.

Irritability

Sometimes, the chemicals coursing through a person's veins can make her simply antisocial. This tweak doesn't cause the same kind of outburst that fury does, unless the character is normally prone to violence. Rather, irritability just makes a character mad at the world.

Refresh

The user feels revitalized as soon as the drug takes hold. She recovers all of her Fatigue levels.

Seizure

A character that overdoses on high-powered drugs usually ends up dropping to the ground, twitching like an electric chair victim, bleeding from the nose, mouth, ears and eyes, biting holes through her tongue, and having her vital organs try to squeeze out between her ribs in order to escape the 120° temperatures inside her chest. A seizure is never a pretty thing to watch, and if it should happen to your character, you'll want to be sure there's a paramedic around. Despite the cinematic effects of a seizure, the game effects are simple. The seizure victim is out for at least the rest of the night, and takes a serious injury to her torso. The Man should draw five cards to determine the extent of the damage. A character with the First Aid skill can lend a hand, as described under Medical Attention, earlier in this chapter.

Scrounging

As can be expected, the black market is alive and thriving in 2073, with plenty of illicit drugs, guns and music to go around. The trick for most characters is finding it all. Anyone attempting to delve into the seedy world of illegal trade should come armed with a decent ranking in her Streetwise skill (and the Contraband Edge couldn't hurt, either).

Every illegal item listed in the equipment section of this chapter has a Rarity listed in its description. When trying to find the item for sale, a character has to make a secret Streetwise test with this as the average difficulty. It's an "average difficulty" because things change rapidly in the underworld, and on any given night, certain types of items might be easier or harder to come by. In short, The Man can change this difficulty however he likes, using the listed Availability as a guideline

Once the test is made (successfully), the buyer can go about haggling a price for the goods (see Socializing, above). Every Boost she got on the Streetwise test to locate the item translates into one Advantage Card in the Persuade test while haggling over the price of the goods. Should the unfortunate character crash the test, she's in for a pretty bad night. It may come in the form of tainted goods, a police sting, or just running into unfriendly people in a blind alley, but the character is going to quickly find out why so many people stay away from the backalleys.

Equipment

Onstage during a gig, a well-made guitar can mean the difference between a good performance and a legendary one. In a dark alley after a gig, a switchblade knife can mean the difference between life and death. Rockers and revolutionaries need to be well equipped to succeed, and sometimes just to survive.

The tables at the end of this section contain lists of audio equipment, weapons, armor and drugs. Each entry contains game statistics and approximate prices for that item. Prices are given in US dollars. If your game is set in another country, The Man should multiply or divide

Audio Gear Statistics

Clearance: All audio equipment is highly regulated by the Ministry. Music permits come in three levels of clearance. Items with a C1 clearance are allowed to well-behaved citizens for listening to the sanitized music that Mother approves for the public. A C2 permit means that a person is allowed to operate instruments to create this filth. Anything with a C3 rating is only available to the Ministry itself. Characters can start the game with a music permit, if they've taken the Permit Edge.

Rarity: This is the difficulty level of a Streetwise test to find something on the black market. Check out Scrounging for the full story on what Rarity means.

Bulk: Bulk is the difficulty level of a Conceal to stash the item away from prying eyes. Hide-and-Seek has more information on how this is done.

Price: Characters who can buy an item legally have to pay the normal price.

Blackmarket: This is the average asking price for the item on the black market.

Weapon Statistics

Unless otherwise noted, every one of these qualities is covered completely in the Violence section. If a weapon has a * in its listing, check out the weapon notes for the full story.

Skill: This is the skill that a character tests when making an attack with the weapon.

Advantage: When attacking with the weapon, a character gains this number of Advantage Cards in the test.

ROF: A gun's rate of fire. Guns with an ROF greater than one can be fired in automatic mode.

Range: The distance a gun can fire without causing a higher difficulty to hit.

Capacity: The number of bullets (or charges, in the case of riot guns) a gun can hold at once.

Damage: This is the damage code of the weapon.

Clearance: This indicates what kind of permit a character needs to use the weapon

the US prices to match the local currency.

Audio Gear

There aren't many bands in the rock underground that sing a capella. Any band that wants to make a difference is going to need to pick up a few instruments. Of course, no matter how good your band might be, it's not going to do any good unless people can hear you. Stage shows can't happen without amps and speakers, and no one can listen to your albums unless they've got a media player at their disposal.

Instruments

Instrument trade and smuggling is a booming business in the underground. As soon as the Ministry formed, crime syndicates were happy to jump into the new markets created by anti-rock legislation. In recent years, Velvet has created distribution networks of their own. These markets only operate inside the group, providing gear for dedicated revolutionaries. Thus far, Velvet's operations are low-key enough that the mob doesn't consider them a threat to profits. But as the revolution grows, leaders of both groups predict a rise in conflict over this lucrative business.

Radios

The only legal way for a person to listen to music is through a radio, either portable or a home set. These devices can play legal music from any of the five Ministry-approved channels, but can't accept any sort of recording media. Even though a radio can't possibly play an illegal disk, owning one still requires a permit, because the Ministry believes that they might serve as a "gateway," causing users to start listening to harder and more dangerous music.

Media Players

Any device that can accept and play a musical medium is entirely illegal. The Ministry can control what gets played over the broadcast channels, but if people had the ability to listen to recordings in their own homes, the manpower needed to keep track of them would be too much to manage.

Of course, the black market is happy to supply what legal channels won't provide. Media players come in three types: home, portable and discrete. A home set looks almost exactly like a home radio, except that it has a slot for accepting disks and a port to allow electronic transfer of files. Portable media players are notably different from radios, due to their size and shape. These can accept both disks and file transfers as well. Dedicated music fans that want to stay out of jail tend to prefer the discrete version. These media players are incredibly small, and can be custom-made to look like a necklace or a big earring. Only a very careful examination will reveal the tiny data port and headphone jack.

Weapons

Even the most pacifist rockers eventually get the idea that it's a lot safer to go around armed (or at least, to have friends that do). It's fair-

ly easy to get simple hand-to-hand weapons, but for a character that wants to pack a bit more punch, riot guns and firearms are the way to go.

Unlike instruments, Velvet doesn't supply its members with illegal weaponry. The tools of violence are frowned upon by the group's philosophy of peaceful revolution. Nevertheless, most members understand the practical necessity to stay armed, and look the other way while their fellow revolutionaries acquire weaponry from the crime syndicates.

Heavy Boots

More than one cop has rushed a stage full of what he thought were unarmed musicians only to discover the practical application of a knee-high, thick-soled, bright-colored plastic boot. Rockers love this kind of footwear both for its form and its function.

Nightsticks

Although this entry is written for the nightsticks that cops and security guards carry, the same qualities apply to any fairly heavy, short stick (such as lengths of pipe or a deactivated stun truncheon).

Stun Truncheons

A stun truncheon is a cop's best friend. Resembling a nightstick with a huge tuning fork on the end, the mere sight of these clubs can cause a hardcore rocker running for safety. The prongs on the front of a truncheon deliver a powerful electrical shock to anyone they touch, usually stunning or knocking the target out. Official police procedures say that only this shock function should be used on a suspect. However, some enterprising cop discovered that a stun truncheon is also a big heavy stick, and that it's much more effective to swing it at disobedient youths. This not only does the usual electrical damage, but also impacts the victim as if she were hit with a nightstick.

Stun truncheons have four settings: pain, low, medium and high. Each setting has a different damage code and clearance level. Though each and every truncheon is physically capable of operating on all settings, all cops have a subdermal chip implant in their hand that sets an upper limit, based on their rank (and thus, their clearance level).

So, a beat cop with C2 clearance can set his truncheon to either pain, low or medium. The very same truncheon in the hands of a higher-ranking officer can be pumped up to the high setting. There are rumors in the underground that truncheons are capable of settings higher than "high," only accessible to Ministry or federal agents, but no one has managed to confirm these suspicions.

A stun truncheon will not function at all in the hands of anyone without a chip implant, so if some rocker gets the bright idea to snatch one, all she'll end up with is a big stick. That is, unless she knows a good tinker. A skilled character can alter a truncheon so that some of its settings will work in non-chipped hands. This requires a test of Repair (Electronics) at difficulty 3. A successful test will activate the truncheon's Pain setting, and every boost will activate one higher setting.

legally. Permits for weapons come in three clearance levels. Private citizens with no record of criminal activity or mental illness can get C1-level weapon permits. A weapon with a C2 clearance can be used by security guards and low-ranking cops. Clearance level C3 is the highest available to riot troops and high-ranking police. Only Ministry agents and elite police gun squads can use C4-level weapons.

Rarity: The difficulty of the Streetwise test to find an illegal weapon for sale on the black market, as described under Scrounging.

Bulk: This is the difficulty to hide the weapon using the Conceal skill. See Hide-and-Seek for the details.

Price: Characters who have the right permits can buy this weapon at the listed price.

Blackmarket: If the item is available illegally, this will be the usual asking price.

Drug Statistics

Unless otherwise noted, drug qualities are fully explained in the Drugs section of this chapter.

Potency: Some drugs require a character to make an Iron Stomach test to avoid any negative side effects. This number is the difficulty level of that test. If no Potency is listed here, then no Iron Stomach test is necessary when using.

Rarity: A character looking to score has to make a Streetwise test at this difficulty to find a dealer. Characters can score up to five doses at once from a single dealer.

Effects: This section describes what the drug does to a user that passes her Iron Stomach test (if one is needed).

Side Effects: If a user fails her Iron Stomach test, she suffers the penalties listed here.

Overdose: Characters that crash the Iron Stomach test suffer from everything listed here, as well as any side effects.

These "hacked" weapons are incredibly popular on the black market, though the higher-level ones are incredibly hard to find.

Riot Guns

Although the average cop has a close, somewhat obsessive and Freudian attachment to his stun truncheon, there are times when he just doesn't want to get anywhere near his target. For these occasions, the riot gun exists. These guns can do at a distance what the truncheon can only do up close by firing a high-energy electrical pulse through the air to shock a target into submission. Truncheons and riot guns (pistols and rifles) operate on the same four settings, and use the same technology to limit the power available to low-ranked officers.

The only difference in the two-chip detection systems is that the guns are built slightly more tamper-resistant than truncheons. A character trying to hack a gun has to make her Repair test against a difficulty of 4.

These weapons are powered by high-efficiency batteries, which are shaped like ammunition clips. These "clips" come in three sizes: one holds 30 charges, one holds 60 and one has 90. Every shot fired from the gun depletes a number of charges, with higher power settings draining more power (the "charges" column in the riot gun chart is the number of charges get used up by firing on that setting).

Drugs

Ball Lightning

The most popular new stimulant on the streets, Ball Lightning is a new and improved amphetamine derivative. It is sold as a translucent crystalline powder, usually with a red tinge, though it's variations come in almost every color of the rainbow. The powder is either snorted or ingested in capsules. Sometimes, the drug is available as a solid lump, which the user has to grind up herself.

Blackpills

Blackpills are the industrial-strength over-the-counter painkillers. Practically every corner pharmacy carries Blackpills, supposedly for people recovering from surgery or with terrible arthritis. But the fact is that more citizens buy Blackpills to satisfy their addiction than because they actually need the drug. It's a stale, numb, stupefying high, but it's legal, and at least people think it's safe. That, and Blackpills are one of the few mass-market drugs that actually do anything.

Bluepills

The Bluepill commercials feature a junior high student in his room, piled floor-to-ceiling with schoolbooks. Suddenly, the kid's mom pops in and asks if he needs help with his homework. The kid says yes, and mom tosses him a small medicine bottle full of little blue pills. His eyes light up, and he screeches, "Thanks, mom!" The next thing you see, the kid, still the same age, is receiving his college diploma. He turns toward the camera, holds up the bottle and winks knowingly.

Sure it's an exaggeration, but anyone dumb enough to swallow that ad is obviously in desperate need of the product it's selling. True, Bluepills do give people a little boost in the reasoning and memory departments, but it's not nearly enough.

The Machine

This drug is so new that not even the federal vice squads know exactly what it is. In some cities, The Machine exploded so quickly that it threatens the cocaine business. But in other places, even the most hardcore black marketeers have never heard of the stuff. Anyone looking through the usual channels for this drug is bound to come up short. The only known dealers are independents, people not connected to the mob or even the rest of the drug culture. Not that Machineheads are ever awake enough to notice, or social enough to care.

The drug itself looks like a dark and slightly reflective gray powder, about the consistency and density of fine sand. Users snort the drug like cocaine, and it takes effect almost immediately, providing a consistent high up until it leaves the user's system, about an hour later.

Purplepills

Do you become sad for no apparent reason? Are you afraid of public speaking? Do you become sad for any reason at all? Have you ever heard a joke and thought it wasn't funny? Has anything bad ever happened in your life? If you answered "yes," then you need Purplepills! That's the rationale that gets half of the citizens in the world to take this stuff. The drug doesn't do anything except lower the inhibitions of hopelessly repressed people. Purplepill users can't tell the difference between being confident and just not caring how dumb they look to everyone else.

White Heat™ Energy Drink

Basically just soda laced with a mega-dose of vitamins, nutrients and cheap stimulants, White Heat™ is both legal and popular among street kids, who like it because it helps them stay up all night and doesn't have all the dangerous side effects of Ball Lightning.

Food and Basic Necessities

Beer/Booze/Cigarettes

Alcohol and tobacco, while still legal, are subject to incredibly high excise taxes, so prices may seem high, compared to the other items in this section.

Fast Food

The lowest common denominator in sustenance is the same as it ever was, with the taste, texture and nutritional value of soft clay. Most fast food still makes the pretense that it contains real meat, though it's more byproduct than anything else.

Monthly Food Expenses

These entries are approximated, assuming a normal balance between eating at home and at restaurants. Characters who are constantly on the go (or on the run) will probably end up spending a bit more than this. Starchildren, of course, end up eating very little, so their expenses tend to be negligible.

Shows

Pub Show

These shows usually consist of one or two short sets by relatively unknown bands. Bar owners usually try to keep concerts down to manageably brief lengths, so as to lower their chance of discovery. Not included in the listed price is the watered-down booze and skanky beer you're likely to find in such establishments.

Company Gig

These form the bulk of underground shows, and they're where bands get the best exposure. A company (or just a collection of managers) gets together four to eight of their favorite groups and put them up onstage to show off. Shows of this magnitude happen in about once every two weeks in most musically-active cities, and are a prime source of underground records. The band lineup usually has a range of groups, from a few total unknowns to a couple "headliners."

Underground Festival

Shows of this sort are the stuff of underground legend. Fans are lucky to see one every year. Not only is it tough to bribe the necessary number of cops and keep the show hidden under the Ministry's nose, but it's also hard to get a number of record companies to stop fighting over stage time and merchandising rights. Underground festivals can consist of up to fifteen bands, usually in two or more locations. Festivals almost always have a single big-name

act to draw the crowds in and a litany of practically unknown groups.

Velvet Gig

A dedicated rocker can usually tell when Velvet's had a hand in organizing a show. It's not as if the group puts their name on the posters, but there's a certain ambiance that's just not present in the low-level criminal gigs, because Velvet isn't into rock for the money. Admission prices are always lower than one might expect; even those with no cash at all rarely get turned away. Drinks are cheap, and so are albums, as Velvet tends to demand a much smaller cut out of sales. Velvet usually can't afford the overt security that most record companies shell out for, but they make up for it with an increased level of secrecy surrounding the show. It's better for a few kids to miss out than for the whole gig to get busted because it was too heavily promoted. These gigs are also rife with plotting and recruitment efforts by Velvet and by the emerging Blue Army.

Living Expenses

Hole-in-the-Wall

Roaches, rats, leaky pipes and boarded up windows. This level of existence is only for those with true grit. Living conditions in these apartments sometimes get so bad that a person would rather live on the street. But at least a place like this is good for stashing your stuff.

Studio Apartment

Life in a big box may not be terribly exciting, but it beats having to beat the rats away from your breakfast every morning. Studio apartments are where most Dim residents make their homes: one-room spaces that provide the bare minimum of comfort.

Two-Bedroom Apartment

There's really not much difference between a decent apartment in the Dims and one downtown or in the suburbs, except for the location. Renters will pay a lot just to feel somewhat safe when they're walking home from work.

Uptown Apartment

Living in a decent neighborhood is a double-edged sword in 2073. On one hand, the area is usually safe, and you don't have to worry (too much) about someone breaking into your place and stealing your gear. On the other, uptown locales are plagued with cops and curious neighbors who might take an interest if unsavory rocker types start hanging about at odd hours of the night.

Transportation

Getting around in 2073 is done much as it was in the early days of the 21st century. Most people drive everywhere, though pollution and higher gasoline prices mean that economy cars and scooters are more common than before. Lower economic classes get by almost exclusively through public transportation and bicycling. Bands usually require at least one car to haul their gear from show to show, since most of it won't fit on the back of a bike or in a subway seat.

The prices in the table are the average costs for a new car. Used cars usually go for 10-50% of the new price, depending on how much work and money the owner is willing to spend on upkeep.

Legal Fees

Permits

These prices are the filing fees to obtain a permit for controlled goods. Starting characters don't have to worry about paying these costs; taking the Permit Edge is enough. Prices are listed here for characters who want to get licensed during gameplay.

Listening License

This is the license that allows a character to own and operate a music-channel radio. Not only does a character with this license have to pay the cost each year, but she also has to pass an annual background check performed by the Ministry. Most law-abiding citizens get Listening Licenses as status symbols, showing off both their wealth and their clean records with one small plastic card.

Musicians' License

Though these permits are intended for musicians trained in Ministry-approved instruments, quite a few rockers (at least, those with no convictions on file) get these permits as a cover for their true occupation.

Armed Citizen License

Well-behaved citizens are allowed to operate some sorts of weaponry, provided they take a training course and can demonstrate some special need.

Usually, this is for people with dangerous jobs (such as late-night cab or bus drivers) or those with some personal threat to their safety (stalking victims and the like).

Security Bonding

Employees of private security companies can get this permit, which allows them to carry higher-powered weapons on the job. Normally, the licensing fees are paid by the company, though more independent agents may have to foot their own expenses.

Fines

The fines listed here are the average penalty for such crimes. Circumstances can cause a fine to be higher or lower than the listed amount, at the discretion of the cop or judge issuing the penalty.

Music Possession, Minor

This fine is levied on anyone found carrying illegal recordings or media players. Offenders get fined per item, so four albums will bring four times the listed fine. Usually, a cop will simply confiscate the goods and issue a ticket on the spot.

Music Possession, Serious

Characters found carrying instruments or recording gear are in much worse trouble. Not only is their gear confiscated, but they also get arrested and taken in for booking. As with minor possession, this fine is issued per piece of equipment, and cops can be very specific in their descriptions. Sad tales circulate in the underground about roadies who get busted and fined for each and every guitar string, drum skin and audio cable in their vans. Though these stories might be exaggerations, penalties have gotten quite a bit harsher ever since the Big Stomp started.

Drug Possession, Minor

This fine is for possession of the "lighter" illegal drugs (or at least what the law considers "light"), such as marijuana, MDMA or mushrooms. Currently, most departments put The Machine in this category, because they aren't sure exactly what to make of it.

Drug Possession, Serious

This not only covers the more dangerous drugs like cocaine, heroin and Ball Lightning, but also the occasional lighter drug that police are making a special effort to fight. Every so often, a police commissioner will get a report claiming that nitrous oxide or synthetic THC is bringing about the downfall of humanity, and the department spends the next month or so in a drug-sniffing frenzy trying to find the stuff and levy the maximum possible fine on offenders. After a while, things return to normal, but in the meantime, users better stay indoors or they'll end up in prison for a relatively minor possession offense.

Audio Gear

Item	Clearance	Rarity	Bulk	Price	Black Market
Electric Guitar, shoddy	C3	2	-	$200	$400
Electric Guitar, decent	C3	3	-	$500	$1500
Electric Guitar, expert	C3	4	-	$1000	$4000
Acoustic Guitar, shoddy	C2	1	-	$100	$100
Acoustic Guitar, decent	C2	2	-	$200	$200
Acoustic Guitar, expert	C2	3	-	$600	$600
Electric Bass, shoddy	C3	2	-	$200	$400
Electric Bass, decent	C3	3	-	$500	$1500
Electric Bass, expert	C3	4	-	$1000	$4000
Drum Kit, shoddy	C3	3	-	$700	$2100
Drum Kit, decent	C3	4	-	$1000	$4000
Drum kit, expert	C3	5	-	$1300	$6500
Keyboard/Synthesizer, shoddy	C2	3	-	$700	$2100
Keyboard/Synthesizer, decent	C2	4	-	$1200	$4800
Keyboard/Synthesizer, expert	C2	5	-	$1700	$1700
Stage Mic	C1	2	3	$200	$400
Practice Amp	C2	2	-	$300	$600
Performance Amp	C3	3	-	$1000	$3000
Portable Radio	C1	1	2	$100	$100
Portable Media Player	C3	2	2	$200	$400
Discrete Media Player	C3	3	Mundane	$500	$1500
Home Radio	C1	1	-	$500	$500
Home Media Player	C3	2	-	$1000	$2000
Music Disks	C3	1	2	$20-40	$20-40

Close-Combat Weapons

Weapon	Skill	Advantage	Damage	Clearance	Rarity	Bulk	Price	Blackmarket
Brass Knuckles	Brawl	2	Body/3	Legal	-	1	$20	$20
Heavy Boots	Brawl	1	Body+4/2	Legal	-	-	$50	$50
Nightstick	Bludgeon	1	Body+4/4	C1	1	3	$50	$50
Small Knife	Slash	1	Body/15	Legal	-	1	$20	$20
Large Knife	Slash	1	Body/21	Legal	-	2	$50	$50
Stun Truncheon	Bludgeon	2	*	*	*		$1000	*

Stun Truncheon Settings

Setting	Clearance	Rarity	Damage	Blackmarket
Pain	C1	2	4/3s	$2000
Low	C2	3	8/7s	$3000
Medium	C3	4	Queen+2/14s	$4000
High	C4	5	Queen+6/21s	$5000

Guns

Weapon	ROF	Range	Damage	Capacity	Clearance	Rarity	Bulk	Price	Blackmarket
9 mm Pistol	1	10	11/30	15	C3	4	3	$1,000	$4,000
Submachine Gun	3	10	11/30	30	C3	5	5	$1,400	$7,000
.22 Pistol	1	10	9/15	8	C3	3	1	$500	$1,500
.50 Pistol	1	10	11/30	15	C3	5	3	$2,000	$10,000
Riot Gun (pistol)	1	20	*	30	*	*	2	$1,000	*
Riot Gun (rifle)	3	50	*	60	*	*	-	$1,400	*

Riot Gun Settings

Setting	Clearance	Rarity	Damage	Charges	Blackmarket
Pain	C1	2	6/3s	1	$500
Low	C2	3	10/6s	2	$1000
Medium	C3	4	Queen+4/12s	3	$1500
High	C4	5	Queen+11/21s	5	$2500

Armor

Armor	Armor Code	Clearance	Rarity	Price	Blackmarket
Padded Clothes	3/0	Legal	-	$100	$100
Thick Leather	3/6	Legal	-	$300	$300
Executive Protection	3/15	C1	2	$2,100	$2,400
Patrol Armor	3/20	C2	3	$5,000	$1,500
Riot Plate	8/40	C3	5	$10,000	$50,000

Drugs

Drug	Potency	Duration	Effects	Side Effects	Overdose	Rarity	Price
Ball Lightning	2	30 minutes	Speed+2, Body+2, Refresh, Agility-2, Addiction: Mundane	Irritability, Agility-2	Furious	2	$10
Blackpills	2	1 hour	Euphoria, Speed-2, Agility-2, Perception-2	Addiction: 1	Blackout	-	$20
Bluepills	2	6 hours	Perception+1, Wit+1 Agility-1	Irritability, Speed-1 Body-1	-	-	$5
Cocaine	2	30 minutes	Perception+2, Speed+1, Body+1, Agility-2, Addiction: 1	Furious, Agility-2	Seizure	3	$10
Heroin	1	30 minutes	Euphoria, Perception-1, Addiction: 1	Perception-1, Speed-2	Seizure	2	$15
The Machine	3	1 hour	Body+3, Speed+3, Impervious, Perception-2, Addiction: 2	Presence-2	Blackout	4	$20
Purplepills	1	6 hours	Will-2	Will-2	-	-	$5
White Heat™	1	10 minutes	Refresh	-	-	-	$5

Food and Basic Necessities

Beer	$5/can
Cheap Booze	$15/liter
Good Booze	$30/liter
Cigarettes	$8/pack
KY Jelly	$6
Fast Food Meal	$5
Typical Restaurant Meal	$18
Gourmet Meal	$50
Monthly Food Expenses, Dimmer	$250
Monthly Food Expenses, Suburbanite	$500
Monthly Food Expenses, Uptowner	$900

Shows

Concert Admission (Pub Show)	$5
Concert Admission (Small Company Gig)	$7
Concert Admission (Large Company gig)	$10
Concert Admission (Underground Festival)	$20
Concert Admission (Velvet Gig)	$5

Living Expenses

Hole-In-The-Wall	$500/month
Small Studio Apartment	$600/month
Two-Bedroom Apartment, Dims	$850/month
Two-Bedroom Apartment, Uptown	$2,000/month
Uptown Apartment	$3,000/month

Transportation

Bicycle	$200
Scooter	$5,000
Motorcycle	$10,000
Economy Car	$15,000
Sedan	$30,000
Sports Car	$50,000
Pickup Truck	$40,000
Luxury Car	$200,000
Minibus	$20,000
Public Transit Pass	$30/month

Legal Fees

Listening License (C1 Permit)	$200/year
Musicians' License (C2 Permit)	$600/year
Armed Citizen License (C1 Permit)	$1,000/year
Security Bonding (C2 Permit)	$8,000/year
Fine, Disobeying an Officer	$50
Fine, Shoplifting	$500
Fine, Public Intoxication	$750
Fine, Assault	$1,000
Fine, Drug Possession, Minor	$150
Fine, Drug Possession, Serious	$300
Fine, Music Possession, Minor	$200
Fine, Music Possession, Serious	$500

Clothes

Business Suit	$500
Civilian Clothes	$200
Common Work Clothes	$100
Upscale Work Clothes	$500
Stage Clothes	$700
Condom	$.50

Chapter Seven: Waiting for The Man

Running the Game

As The Man, your job is simply to create an interesting story. This isn't as easy as it sounds, though. Unlike writers and directors, who have complete command over every aspect of their work, you have no control over the lead roles in your story. You can suggest, prod and guide the player characters in the right direction, but in the end, the players make their own decisions. If the only thing the players do is listen to you tell them how their characters act, they cease to be players, and the game ceases to be a game. The group becomes an audience, and the game becomes your one-Man show.

But that's not to say that you have no control at all. In fact, beyond the actions of individual player characters, your word is law. To the player characters, you are the rest of the world. You are everyone that the group runs into. So, while you can't make the player characters follow every path you create, you can certainly set things up so that they go in that direction anyway.

The key to all this is to know players and their characters well. If you know a particular character's motivations, then you know how to get them engaged and involved in any story you want. One way to do this is to ask players to write up descriptions of their characters. Don't expect anyone to write a fully annotated biography, but most players should be able to manage a page or two.

The members of most game groups are friends outside of the game as well. These groups usually have more fun and can maintain ongoing stories for a long time. This is because they know each other well. Every player knows what the others like and dislike about a game. Some people enjoy the immersive acting part of the game; some are more interested in working within the rules structure and some play games just to socialize with their friends. If you know why your players are there, you can tailor events so that everyone has a chance to get into the game.

Epic or Mini-Series?

Knowing your players is one thing, but you should also keep in mind what you want from the game. One important decision is whether you want the game to be an ongoing series, with each session being an installment in a much larger story, or whether you just have one scenario to play out over a few sessions. Either way can be enjoyable, but each requires its own approach.

A one-shot game should have a very clear purpose. The characters are faced with a single problem, and once they solve it, the story is over. Player characters in these scenarios don't have to be completely compatible. They don't even have to like each other, as long as they all care about the plot. Character motivations should be fairly general in these games. If a character wants more than anything to find her long-lost biological mother, she's probably not going to be able to do that and still participate with the rest of the group. In a long-term game, characters will have time to accomplish that kind of thing.

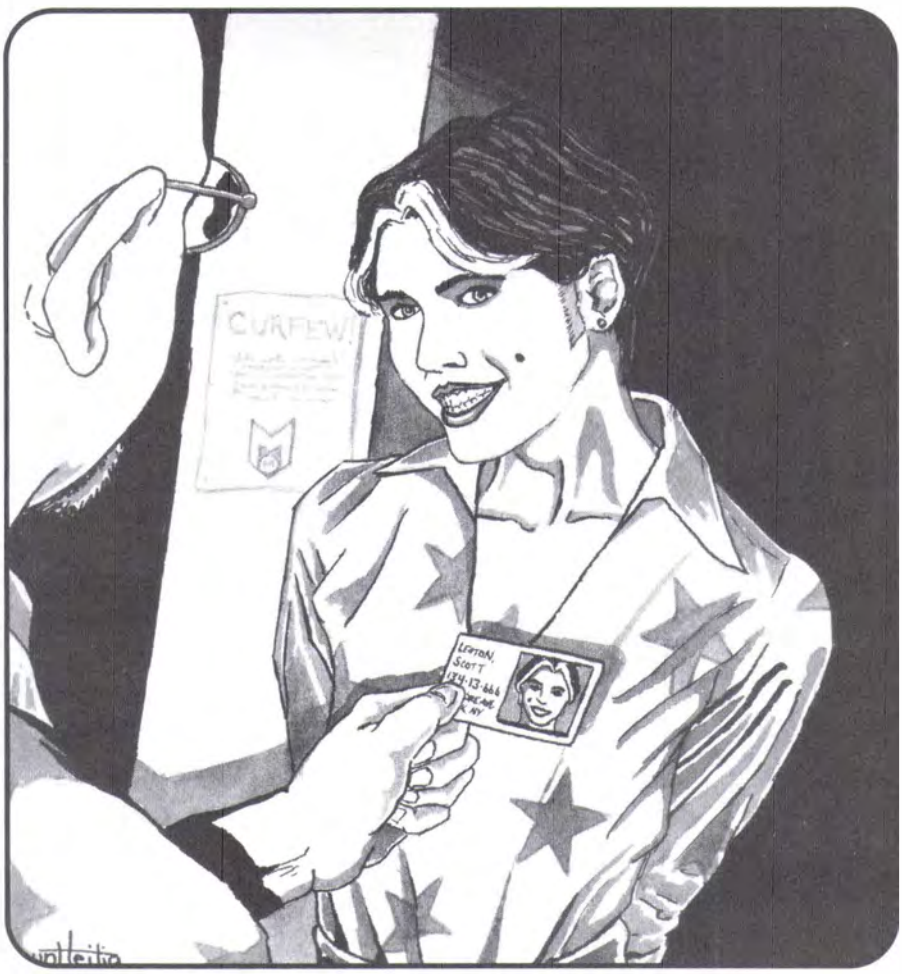
In a long-term game, every event always leads to something else. Characters have to deal with the consequences of their actions, and will be able to develop lasting relationships with each other. When a group of player characters are all old friends, it can be a lot easier to get them involved in a story, because they each have a stake in the others' lives.

Above all, in a long-term game, everything has to be consistent. With recurring characters, overarching

themes and player character interactions, you have the opportunity to create a very "real" story. The other side of this is that players' suspension of disbelief gets lower and lower as the game goes on. A game group that contains a Velvet pacifist and a Blue Army radical might seem plausible at first, but after a few sessions, everyone can't help but ask why those two still hang out together.

A long-term game works best if it has a single theme to tie all the loose ends together. The most obvious theme in this game is the Revolution. Characters in a revolution-themed game will probably be agents of Velvet (or the Blue Army, if you want a very different sort of game), working to undermine the Ministry's control. You could run a game about a band's rise to stardom. Characters in this case would either have to be in the band, or at least very closely tied to it. The revolutionary aspects of the game will still be involved, but only in the background. Characters are only likely to care about the Ministry when it directly interferes with their goals. Or you can run a game about adapting to an alien environment. The entire group in this case would have to be Starchildren, and will face opposition from groups like the Osterberg Institute more often than the Ministry.

Whatever the theme, the important thing is that all the player characters are after the same thing, at least in the global sense. If one character in a group has no connection to the theme, she's going to end up



Taking It Easy

Needless to say, it will be very easy for player characters to be hurt or killed if they have violent tendencies. One hit with a pistol can kill, which seems like common sense, but may come as a surprise to some players. Obviously, no game is going to be much fun if characters drop like flies during every gig. Hopefully, this means that the characters won't be rushing into fights every night. But until that happens, you may want to take it a little easy on players who don't know better. When you draw cards for an injury, you don't necessarily have to use the highest one drawn. If a player was being too bold in combat, show her the high card and mention what could have happened to her character if you hadn't been so gentle. If that doesn't get the point across, don't be gentle next time.

getting marginalized as the game goes on. You will have to be on the lookout for this sort of thing from the moment the group makes their characters. If one character just won't be able to function in the game you're running, give the player some suggestions on how she could be changed to fit into the story.

Backstage

When you're The Man, you see everything. From where you're standing, the rigging is exposed, the cables are lying across the floor and the racks are shaking from the vibrations. You're not watching the show, but you get to see how it all fits together. There's a lot of information purposely left out of the other chapters simply because it's not stuff that players need to know. Some of this is setting material: details about the Ministry and other groups that you might want to spring on the characters when they least expect it. Also, there are some rules that players aren't allowed to see because it might spoil the story if they did. Of course, since you're already backstage at this show, all those little details are right here for your enlightenment.

Action Cards

When players create their characters, they're going to need you to assign them Action Cards. Since they come up in random order, the actual value of the cards you assign doesn't really matter. In the interest of keeping things moving quickly during a fight, it helps if you assign all the player characters action cards in the same suit (or at least the same color). This way, all you have to do is look at the suit of a card that comes up to know whether or not it's a player character's turn to act. You can do the same for any MCs in the fight, as long as their suit is different from the PCs'.

Drawing Injuries

After a fight is over and the smoke clears, it's your job to figure out exactly how badly everyone got hurt. Unless a downed character managed to get help from someone with First Aid right after the fight, you're going to draw one card for every injury-causing hit she took during the fight. This means any single hits

that exceeded her Injury Threshold and any hits she took after reaching her Overkill Threshold in wounds. If she did get First Aid (described under Medical Attention in Chapter Six), you draw one less card, plus one less for each boost on the First Aid test.

Some weapons stand a much better chance of severely messing a character up. If the wounded character didn't take damage from any bullets or bladed weapons, discard any black cards and jokers from the cards you've drawn for the injury. The character will probably walk away from the fight with scrapes and bruises, but at least she'll be swalking away. Characters that get stabbed or shot are potentially in much worse trouble.

If, because of First Aid or because you discarded black cards, you end up with no cards for an injury, the wounded character gets off easy. After spending some time in pain from the damage, she gets up without any last effects.

The location where the character took the worst damage is important. If you haven't already decided,

Injury Effects

Big White Sock: The injured character can't put any weight at all on her bad leg. If she has crutches, she can get around at half her normal movement rate.

Bruises: Bruised muscles and bones cause the difficulty to go up for any test involving fast movement. The exact penalty is listed on the chart.

Concussion: The character has trouble thinking clearly. Reduce her Wit by 2 ranks.

Crushed: There is no way to salvage the character's mangled limb. Any doctor that examines it will insist on amputation.

Embolism: Massive trauma causes a blood vessel in the character's head to burst, killing her almost instantly.

Headache: The wounded character gets up after the fight and has lingering pains in her head for the next couple days, but is otherwise fine.

Limp: She can walk on her leg just fine, but running is quite painful. The character has to succeed at an Endurance test any time she wants to move at her running speed. The difficulty of this test is listed in the chart.

Migraines: The headaches from hell. The injured character has a penalty to any tests that require intense concentration. The exact penalty is listed in the chart entry.

Pinched Nerve: The character has a constant, dull pain

Head Injuries

Card	Injury	Recovery
Ace	Headaches	Foolproof
2	Migraines: +1	1
3	Slashed Up	1
4	Migraines: +2	1
5	Slashed Up, Ringing Ears	2
6	Migraines: +3	2
7	Slashed Up, Ringing Ears, Concussion	2
8	Migraines: +3	3
9	Slashed Up, Ringing Ears, Concussion	3
10	Migraines: +3 (Migraines: +1)	3
Jack	Slashed Up, Ringing Ears, Concussion (Slashed Up)	4
King	Migraines: +3 (Migraines: +2)	4
Queen	Slashed Up, Ringing Ears, Concussion (Slashed Up, Ringing Ears)	4
Joker	Embolism	None

Torso Injuries

Card	Injury	Recovery
Ace	Sore	Foolproof
2	Bruises: +1	1
3	Wheezy	1
4	Bruises: +2	1
5	Wheezy, Stiff Joints	2
6	Bruises: +3	2
7	Wheezy, Stiff Joints, Pinched Nerve	2
8	Bruises: +3	3
9	Wheezy, Stiff Joints, Pinched Nerve	3
10	Bruises: +3 (Bruises: +1)	3
Jack	Wheezy, Stiff Joints, Pinched Nerve (Wheezy)	4
King	Bruises: +3 (Bruises: +2)	4
Queen	Wheezy, Stiff Joints, Pinched Nerve (Wheezy, Stiff Joints)	4
Joker	Ruptured Organ	None

that erupts any time she tries to move fast. Reduce her Speed by two ranks.

Pulled Something: The character may not know what it is, but something is definitely out of place. The difficulty level of any test involving this limb is increased by the number listed in the chart.

Ringing Ears: Head trauma leaves the character unable to pay attention very closely. Her Perception is reduced by two ranks.

Ruptured Organ: The character's body has taken so much punishment that one of her vital organs can no longer function and she dies.

Slashed Up: Cuts and bruises on the character's face reduce her Appearance by two ranks.

Sore: The character's battered body hurts, but she is otherwise fine.

Sprained Fingers: The character can't use her injured hand at all until she recovers. More than a few guitarists have had their careers cut short by the permanent variety of this injury.

Stiff Joints: The character is overcome by pain whenever she bends her back, knees, shoulders or neck. Reduce her Agility by two ranks.

Wheezy: The wounded character constantly feels as if she's had the wind knocked out of her. Reduce her Body by two ranks.

Arm Injuries

Card	Injury	Recovery
Ace	Sore	Foolproof
2	Pulled Muscle: +1	1
3	Stiff Joints	1
4	Pulled Muscle: +2	1
5	Stiff Joints, Pinched Nerve	2
6	Pulled Muscle: +3	2
7	Sprained Fingers	2
8	Stiff Joints, Pinched Nerve	3
9	Pulled Muscle: +3	3
10	Sprained Fingers	3
Jack	Stiff Joints, Pinched Nerve (Stiff Joints)	4
King	Pulled Muscle: +3 (Pulled Muscle: +2)	4
Queen	Sprained Fingers (Sprained Fingers)	4
Joker	Crushed	None

Leg Injuries

Card	Leg Injury	Recovery
Ace	Headache	Foolproof
2	Limp: +1	1
3	Pinched Nerve	1
4	Limp: +2	1
5	Pinched Nerve, Stiff Joints	2
6	Limp: +3	2
7	Pinched Nerve, Stiff Joints, Big White Sock	2
8	Limp: +3	3
9	Pinched Nerve, Stiff Joints, Big White Sock	3
10	Limp: +3 (Limp: +1)	3
Jack	Pinched Nerve, Stiff Joints, Big White Sock (Pinched Nerve)	4
King	Limp: +3 (Limp: +2)	4
Queen	Pinched Nerve, Stiff Joints, Big White Sock (Pinched Nerve, Stiff Joints)	4
Joker	Crushed	None

based on your narration of the combat, choose a body location (head, torso, arm or leg) to take the injury now. A simple guideline is to have characters take injuries to the limbs in minor confrontations, and to the vitals in the really important fights. This means that a simple "misunderstanding" with a rival band won't end up killing any player characters, though they may be badly hurt.

Out of the cards you draw for injuries (after discarding, if necessary), find the highest-ranking one on the Injury Chart for the location where the character is injured. The descriptions for all the listed injury effects can be found in the sidebars. Tell her all the gory details, and make a note of the injury for the future (some have very long-lasting side effects).

Healing Up

Once a character takes an injury, she might end up keeping it for a very long time. Every two weeks, an injured character should make a Body test to get better. The Recovery section on the injury chart gives the difficulty level of this test. Once a character succeeds on this test, the only thing she might have to worry about is permanent damage.

Permanent Damage

Sometimes injuries can be so bad that a character never quite recovers. The higher-ranked injuries on the chart have some effects listed in parentheses. Unless a character gets a doctor to treat the injury, she will suffer the effects in parentheses permanently. For a doctor to successfully treat the injury, she has to test her Medicine skill at a difficulty equal to the one listed under Recovery.

Fame

Some bands are in it for the revolution, hoping to override the Ministry's control with the power of rock. Some are in it for the money, but they're just

kidding themselves–there is no money in underground music. But the majority of bands are in it for one thing: fame. For rules purposes, Fame is assigned a number, and is handled like "points" the band can earn for playing good concerts.

This system is back here because the players shouldn't see recognition and stardom as a numbers game; once they start accounting, they stop rocking, and no one wants that. You might want to keep track of the band's Fame yourself, or you could nominate one specific player to do so, as long as she doesn't tell the exact numbers to the rest of the group.

When a player character band starts up, they may or may not already have Fame, depending on whether any of them bought the Fame edge during character creation. If this is the case, total up the amount of Fame each member brings to the band. If no characters take this edge, then the group starts out completely unknown, but if they're good enough, that's going to change.

As a band gains Fame, their reputation in the scene grows. They gain a few dedicated fans here and there, it becomes easier for them to get booked, record scouts take notice and Velvet might offer them membership. On the other hand, the more people talk about the group, the more likely it is that they end up on Mother's hit list. There are five "levels" of Fame that bands can reach: Unknown, Indie, Star, Idol and Legend. Each level brings its own perks, and allows the band to have more impact on the world around them. The exact details on how a band can gain or lose Fame are in the Performance section, below.

Unknown (0-39 Fame): A band at this level has to do everything itself. Even if they can negotiate for stage time to play, they'll probably have to pay out of their own pockets, and may still get bumped at the last minute if a big-name act wants to play an encore right before their slot. Chances are, the group is going to end up having to do a lot of favors for promoters and venue owners if they're ever going to get a chance to make a name for themselves.

Indie (40-89 Fame): At this level, quite a few fans and even a couple promoters know the group. Getting a gig still isn't easy, but once they've scored some stage time, the band isn't likely to get bumped like a group of unknowns. Managers and record scouts start taking notice of the group, but the offers they make the group are probably going to be exploitative at best (usually taking a 60-70% cut or more).

Star (90-139 Fame): All the group's hard work finally starts paying off. When a manager or record scout makes them an offer, it's almost fair (taking about a 10-30% cut). If the band isn't already working with Velvet, they get offers for membership at this point (depending on the band, the Blue Army might also get interested). Not only do the characters have a strong underground following, but people who aren't even fans respect their fame. Whenever they have to make a Presence or Appearance-based test against someone tied to the rock scene, band members get an extra Advantage Card.

Idol (140-199 Fame): Few bands ever get this far without help from Velvet, the Blue Army or the mob. All rock Idols are high on Mother's most-wanted list, so it helps to have the backing of a group that can post bail, provide safehouses and cover their tracks. On the plus side, the band is almost instantly recognizable by anyone in the rock scene, and get two Advantage Cards on Presence – and Appearance-based tests against anyone who's even heard their name. Getting a gig is no problem, as most venues would gladly bump a band to make room for the group. Groupies are plentiful, and life is good.

Legend (200 or more Fame): Bands at this stage are guaranteed a place in the history books. They can get just about anything they want from scene people, and are constantly receiving offers to headline gigs. The band probably has to go around in

disguise, not only to avoid Mad Mother, but also the mobs of groupies who are likely to tear them apart should they get too close. Legendary bands form the core leadership in Velvet, and can begin organizing their own resistance hubs.

Performance

This is the behind-the-scenes part of the system for running concerts. Make sure you've read through the Performance section of chapter six before getting into this, so that you know what the players are up to.

Crowd Modifier

Before the gig even starts, you need to decide whether there should be a crowd modifier. Usually, a modifier isn't necessary, but special circumstances can change the audience's attitude. Only exceptional cases result in modifiers, so use them sparingly.

Gaining Awe

During a concert, the band tries to impress the crowd as much as possible. How well they do at this is represented by Awe. If the band does well on a song, they get more Awe, and if the blow it, they lose Awe. As the system in chapter six implies, when characters succeed at a higher-difficulty song, their Awe goes up more than if it were a simple one.

If the band succeeds at the test for a song, look for the one member who did better than everyone else, and count up the number of boosts she gained (if any). Look up the difficulty that the players chose for the song on the Awe chart. The band gains Awe for the successful test (listed under "Success"), and a bit extra for each boost that the best member gained (listed under "Per Boost"). If anyone in the band failed the test, they don't get any Awe, even if the rest of the band succeeded. Should anyone in the band really mess up and crash the test, subtract the "per boost" amount from their total.

Awe

Song Difficulty	Success	Per Boost
1	2	2
2	2	3
3	3	4
4	3	5
5	4	6

After the Gig

Once the band finishes their last song, check out their final Awe total. If they did well enough, the band gains Fame, and moves a bit closer to their dreams of stardom. The "After the Gig" chart tells you how the band's Fame changes, based on their final Awe total. Tell the players how they did, and how much they gained in Fame.

After the Gig

Total Awe	Fame
6 or less	Lose 5 Fame
7-12	No change
13-18	Gain 5 Fame
19-24	Gain 10 Fame
24 or more	Gain 15 Fame

Experience

After each game session, you should award the characters a few experience points, depending on their performance during the game. Usually, you should give each player one point for showing up to the session, unless someone really detracted from the game (if this becomes a chronic problem in your group, you may wish to stop inviting certain players). A player who roleplayed reasonably well and who accomplished her character's motivations in some small part should get one to two more. For really exceptional roleplaying, give a player one or two more points as well. You should almost never award more than five experience per session to any single character.

"Rock music, along with other elements of Anarchist culture...are part of an arsenal of subversive weapons, aimed at reinforcing the commitment of young world citizens to an antisocial ideology."
-Ministry spokeswoman Idith B. Ivanovich, 2073

The Ministry of Music

Founded in 2049 as the largest ministry within the fledgling International Culture Correction and Control (ICCC), the Ministry of Music today has an authoritative foothold in most every country in the world. Among the ICCC and the world at large, the Ministry of Music has become the flagship Ministry of sorts, and the chief antagonist in the scope of our story. While there are actually five Ministries of Culture (not to mention the numerous sub-ministries), when people talk about "The Ministry," they're usually talking about the Ministry of Music ("Mad Mother").

Mad Mother's Reach

In many ways, the Ministry of Music functions like a cross between the United Nations and the Drug Enforcement Agency. It's a police force in its own right, and has taken over enforcement and prosecution of global anti-music laws. Cooperation from government agencies and local authorities is crucial to their cause, however, and the Ministry is given plenty of elbow room to do what they please.

Under ICCC laws, the Ministry has automatic jurisdiction in any case involving illegal music. Domestic police departments are supposed to report such activities to their local Ministry consulate, where agents review the case and decide whether or not to intervene. Unless the case represents an immediate threat (such as an instrument trafficking cartel or a band on the most wanted list), the Ministry usually sends the case right back to the local police, preferring not to get their hands dirty on trivial matters. The police still must notify Ministry agents of any new developments, but are allowed to handle such matters themselves.

When the Ministry does decide to step in, any local law enforcement is obliged to step aside. This usually happens when a situation has grown too large for any local department to handle alone. The Ministry's human and technological resources are beyond that of any domestic organization. From armored shock troops to keen investigators, all armed with the latest gadgets, the Ministry is extremely efficient in weeding out troublemakers and ensuring that no new resistance will grow to replace them. Favored tactics include infiltration, surveillance and old-fashioned mass beatdowns.

Of course, police departments have never liked yielding their authority to anyone; whenever a music situation gets so bad that Ministry operations are needed to eliminate the resistance, local precincts are hit with a wave of layoffs and resignations. Departments use this opportunity to promote anti-rock hardliners, hoping to stem any new illegal activity before it gets too bad. These "replacements" are sometimes more frightening to rockers than the Ministry itself, since they'll go to any ends (sometimes even illegal ones) in order to keep their city off the Ministry's radar in the future.

Intelligence

The side of Mother the public never sees, and the beginning of any effective enforcement action, is that of the Ministry's intelligence division.

Watchdog programs

Basic watchdog work is usually handled by net monitors and phone taps. A powerful array of computers is constantly scanning most phone conversations in major cities and other high-activity areas. As frightening as that sounds, false alarms congest the system so excessively that less than 2% of all "phone flags" turn out to be genuine "hits." To make matters worse, the current software is only capable of monitoring regular voice transmissions. The privacy of anyone with a black-market phone scrambler, or anyone sending non-voice information over phone lines, is generally assured.

Monitoring illegal activity on the internet, which is now under strict ICCC control, is much more successful. Traffic is already tightly controlled, as most servers are secured government joints. Space for commercial activity is leased out to companies and based on millions of government-owned (and poorly maintained) machines. If anything wacky happens online, it's usually found within a day or so by a "routine monitoring program" (actually a Ministry-developed Artificial Intelligence entity) known as Ghost. Hacked sites, as a result, are a fleeting (and sometimes dangerously incriminating) affair, and more than ever before, the hackers of 2073 have their work cut out for them.

The most effective ways around these mass surveillance programs are, of course, the simplest. Old-fashioned direct-connect bulletin boards aren't monitored by Ghost, shortwave radios are too uncommon for the Ministry to waste time with, and paper has to be seen to be read. The most common tool of the rabble-rouser, therefore, is good old-fashioned word of mouth. That's where the similarly old-fashioned human agents step in.

Agents

The more personal and, ultimately, most effective wing of Ministry intelligence is made up of Ministry agents. These men and women are the sharpest and meanest breed of snoop, the crème de la crème of Ministry tools. With access to a vast array of classified information, clever gadgets and a solid education in guile and subterfuge, one good agent (and a little muscle) can easily tear down an entire cell of the resistance, swiftly and permanently.

Agents often head large investigations, acting as directors of sorts, usually assisting local authorities in their efforts. They also work alone (undercover) quite frequently, worming their way into bands and record organizations with ease, gathering valuable information while softening the target up for the kill. Agents are also licensed to carry live rounds, rather than the "soft bullets" available to lesser Ministry thugs.

Ministry Agent Statistics

Presence: 9 **Appearance: 7**

Wit: Jack **Speed: 10**

Bureaucracy: 7
Computer: 10
Investigate: Jack
Dodge: Jack

Perception: King **Agility: 7**

Alertness: Jack
Detect Lies: 9
Search: Jack
Shoot: 9
Brawl: 8

Will: 10 **Body: 9**

Guts: 9

Gear:

Riot pistol (C5 clearance)
Spiderweave bodysuit

Enforcement

The dark-armored shock troops of the Ministry are a striking image, and most inexperienced rockers fully expect such brutes to spend their free time trouncing parking offenders or prowling dark alleys. In truth, however, shock troops are only the most severe finger of the Ministry's enforcement arm – and most operations don't call for such harsh measures. When bona-fide shock troopers do show up, they show up by the dozen. Resources like that are usually reserved for stomping out shows, and aren't tossed about as often as players might fear.

Security Personnel

Typically equipped with light body padding and a basic metal baton, security personnel are just a bit meaner than the average police officer, and they're almost as common. "Security boys" usually accom-

pany and assist Agents, when needed, and patrol the streets when things are hot.

More often than not, they're extra hands for an industrious Ministry agent. When an agent is pumping a bystander for information, they're the guys listening from inside the nearby pizza van. When an agent smells something fishy in a local dive, these are the guys who look for the evidence.

Ministry security officers are the most common Ministry thugs players are likely to meet. They step in where the local cops stand down, and proceed to do pretty much the same job. Of course, as they answer only to the Ministry, security troops can get away with far more naughty behavior than most officers of the law.

Shock Troops

The very finest in face-stomping today, shock troops are the Ministry's idea of a standing army. Where there's a crowd of angry rockers waiting to be suppressed, these boys are called in to make a point or two. While they used to be reserved for use in really large busts, the recent Big Push has found them delivering surprise beatdowns in unusually small places. Velvet people might say they're trying to make examples of the easy kills, and they might just be right. After all, nothing says "authority" like a big, shiny boot in the face.

Technology

In addition to the trusty "non-lethal" stun truncheons and riot guns, The Ministry has access to a secret array of effective crowd-control equipment, much of which exists outside of public knowledge. The most commonly used "secret tech" items include spiderweave armor, surveillance hounds and blur suits.

Spiderweave Bodysuit

All over the countryside, shady farms house pigs, goats and cows that have been genetically altered to produce spider's silk from their mammary glands. This silk, stronger than steel and as light and flexible as fine cloth, is harvested and woven into the armored suits issued to high-clearance Ministry investigators. These suits are practically impenetrable to cutting implements; even bullets rarely penetrate their fiber. However, since the suit is still very flexible, it doesn't protect against blunt trauma at all. Ministry agents in the field wear this armor when they need the protection, but can't risk drawing attention by wearing full riot plate gear.

Spiderweave has a protection code of 0/30, and is available at clearance level C5. Thus far, none of these suits are available on the black market.

Blur Suit

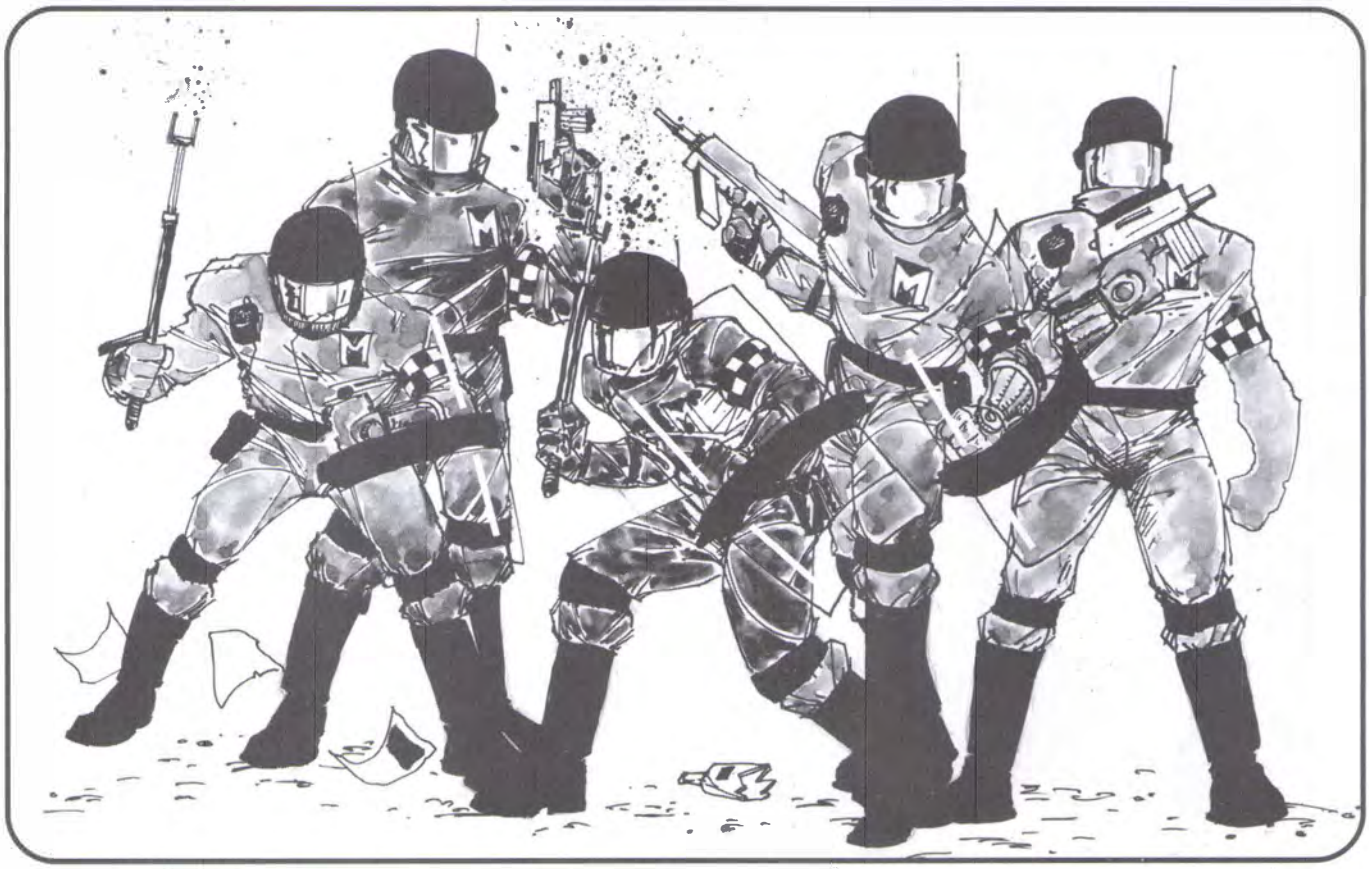
These cumbersome devices consist of a full body suit and face shield, made of a special microcomputer-responsive material that monitors the area around the wearer, and adjusts its color and light levels to

The Rest of the ICCC

As The Man, you might be wondering what the other Ministries do with their time. While less active and mostly unsuccessful in their efforts, these agencies are important parts of culture control, and might make an interesting aside in any Starchildren game.

The less central ministries include (in order of relative size and power) the Ministries of Literature, Communications, Education, Drugs, and Sport and Competition. Each has its own story, and most even face their own respective resistance groups; these are stories for another day, and rather uneventful stories at that.

In case you're wondering, the Ministry of Sport and Competition is usually referred to as the Ministry of Games. Being something of a joke in the view of other ministries, it's generally where undesired or troublesome Ministry employees are transferred to, never to feel useful or important again!



Security Officer Statistics

Presence: 8

Appearance: 5

Wit: 6

Bureaucracy: 7
Computer: 10
Investigate: Jack

Speed: 10

Dodge: 9

Perception: 10

Alertness: 6
Search: 8
Shoot: 9

Agility: 7

Bludgeon: 7
Brawl: 7

Will: 9

Guts: 6

Body: 10

Gear:

Riot gun (C3 clearance)
Stun truncheon (C3 clearance)
Patrol armor

Shock Trooper Statistics

Presence: 4

Appearance: 3

Wit: 6

Speed: King

Dodge: Jack

Perception: 10

Alertness: 9
Search: 9
Shoot: Jack

Agility: 10

Bludgeon: 10
Brawl: 10

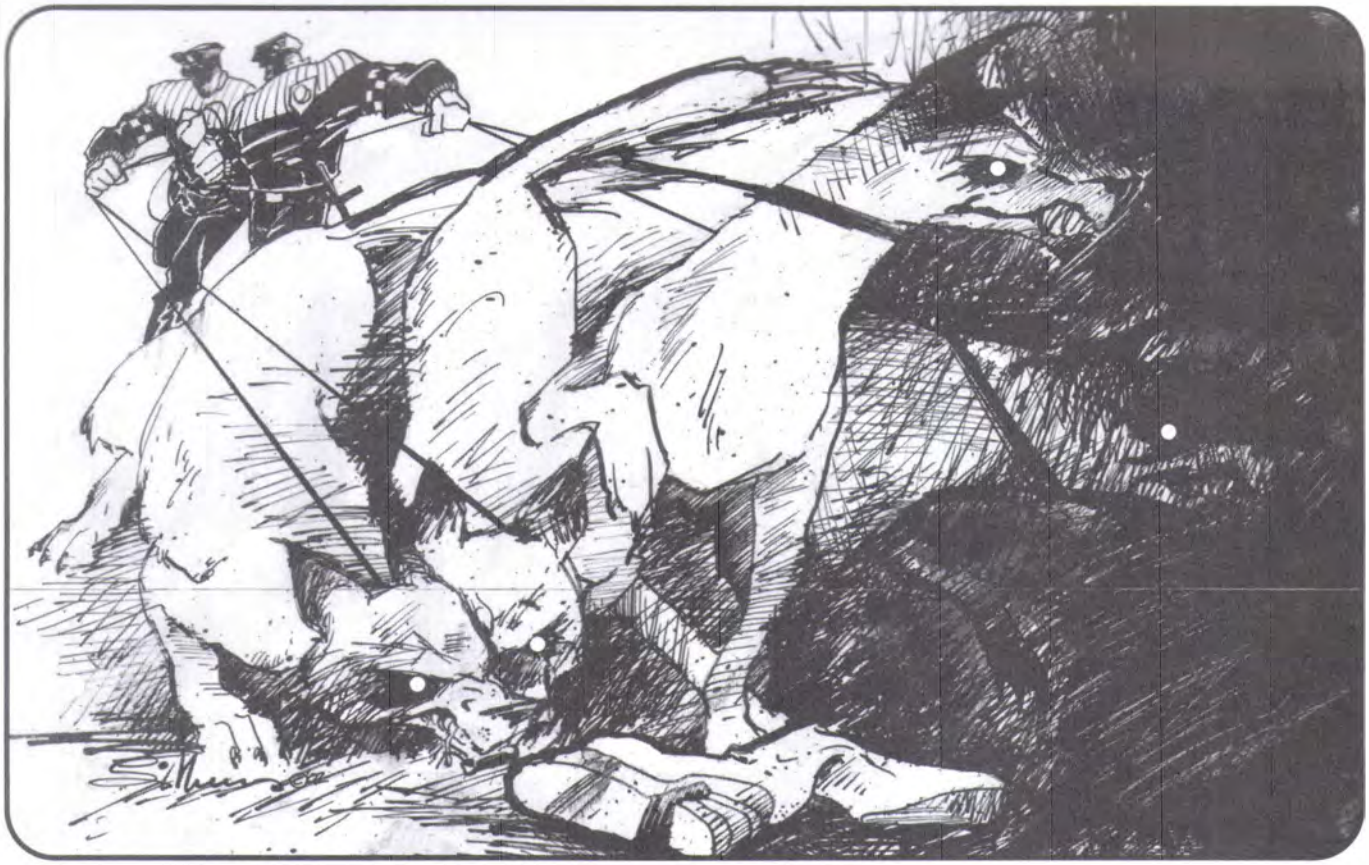
Will: King

Guts: Jack

Body: Jack

Gear:

Riot gun (C4 clearance)
Stun truncheon (C4 clearance)
Riot plate armor



Surveillance Hound Statistics

Presence: - **Appearance: -**

Wit: 3 **Speed: King**
Dodge: Jack

Perception: King **Agility: 10**
Alertness: Jack Brawl: Jack
Search: King

Will: 10 **Body: 9**
Guts: King

Gear:
None, though the Hounds' teeth and claw attacks have a damage code of Body+5/10.

match. This appears to "bend" light around the wearer. While not exactly invisibility, the resulting blurry, distorted silhouette makes the wearer difficult to spot on a rooftop or in a darkened environment.

Blur suits are most effective when the wearer stands still, especially in low light and poor weather conditions, and in positions where there's little visual detail directly behind the wearer (standing against the night sky works best). They're handy for stationary stealth and surveillance work, and are thus most commonly used by snipers. For this purpose, the suit includes an adjustable equipment hood of the same material, to cover weapons, tripods, radios and other equipment.

Blur suits only visually mask the wearer, and do nothing for the wearer's temperature, etc. The wearer does block intense light, and may cast a shadow or illuminate surroundings in certain situations.

Anyone attempting to fire at an agent wearing a blur suit suffers a penalty to the difficulty of the shot. The penalty can range from +2 (for an agent standing against a complex background) to +4 (for standing against a solid-colored background like a clear sky).

Surveillance Hounds

Though the Ministry denies any connection to the secretive cadre of mad scientists known as the Osterberg Institute, the two groups do occasionally share technology and information. The Surveillance Hound is one of the more useful gadgets obtained through these shadowy deals. After Dr. Osterberg's experimentation into sensory implants bore fruit in the creation of The Machine, the doctor was left with an overstock of rabbits, guinea pigs, dogs, rats and monkeys, all of which had implants that tapped their eyes and ears, transmitting the data back to the lab. Osterberg had most of the animals destroyed, except for his Labrador Retrievers (the doctor doesn't like to tell anyone, but he's got a soft spot for dogs). These, he quietly sold to his contacts in the Ministry of Music. Since then, Osterberg labs have been pumping out new Hounds as fast as they can.

Ministry agents release the hounds into any city suspected of heavy rocker activity. Hounds mingle into the local population of stray dogs, where they can remain for years, surviving off of garbage and vermin in the bowels of the city. Their training regimen causes them to gravitate toward the sounds and smells that tend to permeate the area around rocker clubs. This provides the Ministry with a pack of mobile and inconspicuous "security cameras" that can sniff out the resistance better than any human agent. Any bar that lets thumping drum beats and guitar riffs leak through their soundproofing is bound to have a pack of Hounds living in the area. If and when the Ministry finally raids a club, the area Hounds are ordered to roam the streets, looking for escaped rockers to maul. The unfortunate kids who run into these vicious mutts usually don't stand a chance; the dogs are trained to kill, and they usually do. The Ministry doesn't have a problem with this, since the existence of the Hounds is a closely guarded secret and the attack can't be traced back to its source.

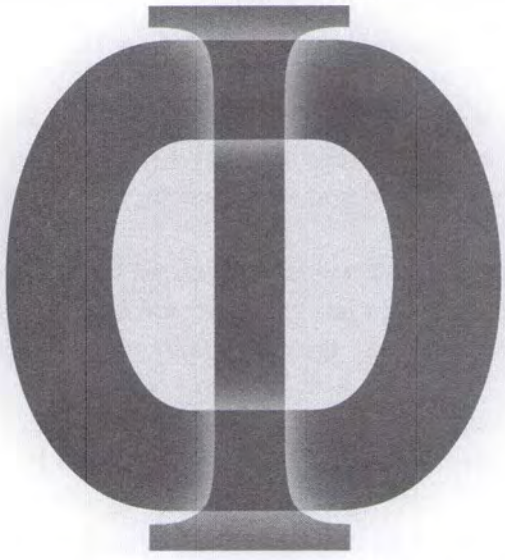
"Now, when I say inhuman, I am not abusing that word. It may surprise you, as it has surprised me, that our foe is organized, and a power seems to be behind that organization. That power, from what I have found, is probably not a government, a cult or an organization. It is perhaps a species other than our own. I am trying to tell you...that rock and roll, and my research supports this...may be an extraterrestrial plot."

-Dr. Luther Osterberg's famous last address, 2071

The Osterberg Institute

During the Ministry's formative years, the brilliant psychologist Luther Osterberg was hired as the head of the musical research laboratory. Chosen for his prominent role in the original anti-music hearings, he initially helped establish many of the Ministry of Music's darker "little operations." Osterberg had a strange insight into music's effect on the mind, experimenting with tone-deafening and influence technology, later becoming best known for his Positive Harmony project – the introduction of Ministry-provided shopping music, containing complex and subtle arrangements of notes which "spoke" to an unsuspecting public. A rising star in both the academic world and the Ministry, Luther's work provided scientific evidence to the arguments of music's enemies and dangerously powerful tools to many grateful ICCC agencies.

His career came to an abrupt halt in 2071, at the



yearly Cultural Correction Summit in Seattle. During a press conference, he announced his theory that rock & roll was a deliberate conspiracy to undermine the human race, and that the forces behind it were – you guessed it – creatures from outer space! This revelation shocked the public (which was now firmly convinced he'd gone mad), to say nothing of his closest colleagues (who had never participated in the "research" he referred to). In the ensuing public-relations nightmare, the Doctor was encouraged by the Ministry to resign. When that didn't do the trick, they fired him like a bullet.

Scorned and incensed, Osterberg decided to single-handedly save the world from the alien menace, and founded the Osterberg Institute for Extraterrestrial Musician Research. Two years later, through the help of a few wealthy lunatics and sympathetic Ministry insiders, the Institute now has chapters (often completely autonomous) in just about every major city.

The Institute, in Theory...

As far as the public knows, the Osterberg Institute is a fringe group of UFO fanatics. They're amusing, harmless, and waste all of their time publishing newsletters, broadcasting the occasional "public awareness" commercial, and providing little membership cards to anyone who sends twenty bucks to their post office box. Once common fodder for newsfeed comic relief and the butt of countless talk-show monologues, they've now passed into the realm of the unforgotten kooks of yesteryear.

...and in Actuality

Conventional wisdom fails, as usual, on the true nature of this organization. In reality, the Osterberg Institute (called The Institute by those closer to its activities) is actively working to validate what its members believe and, even worse, to do something about it.

Luther Osterberg is living a mad scientist's dream. His organization has extensive funding, through his own savings and generous (anonymous) contributions. He has a small army of fallen doctors, chemists, biologists and paranoid followers. Some members are simply in it for a chance to be part of something, while others are genuinely as paranoid as Luther is. Any blunders which threaten to expose him are neatly tidied up by his friends in high places. And, best of all, he has a secret laboratory, deep underground.

Operations

The Institute's public mission is to raise awareness of the alien threat. This is mostly done through the newsletter, The Humanity, as well as paid advertisements and small public rallies. Luther's not an idiot; he knows how the people regard his organization, and most public awareness activities are performed out of a sense of duty (you've got to try, after all), or just to give back-burnered members something to do.

It's his belief that any hard scientific evidence supporting his claims might turn curious bemusement into a worldwide panic, making the job all the more difficult. Luther thus ensures any "evidence" available to the public is of the blurry, inconclusive variety. In addition, while these operations do bring in the occasional recruit, they serve mainly to stroke the members' confidence whenever the real mission is going slowly.

The real mission, of course, is to "research and destroy" the enemy. Osterberg's Institute is currently working to do this along several lines.

Intelligence

Through private eyes, stoolpigeons, Machine contagion and other, less personal means (toilet cameras and the like) the Institute keeps a watchful eye on as many suspected aliens as it can. All evidence concerning the behavior of Starchildren, be it notebook scribbles or recorded conversation, is carefully picked apart for clues.

Basic intelligence gathering (often taking the form of clumsy stalking) is the most common activity undertaken by restless card-carrying Institute members. It's straightforward, relatively cheap, and it can make an old, retired psychology teacher feel like a spry secret agent.

Biology

Documenting and studying the alien's physiology is probably the least common form of research undertaken by the Institute, and (in Luther's opinion) also the most fruitful. This involves capturing and dissecting suspected specimens.

Through these rather brutal examinations, Oster-

berg has formed a reasonably complete idea of what Starchildren are, and how they physically work. The mystery of the Starchildren's mental powers are harder to tack, although the Institute is pushing forward with what few living samples it can find. Such operations often draw the highest members of the Institute from around the country, when performed. More often than not, however, it's just a human club kid who made the mistake of dolling up a bit too much.

Cleanup

Curiously, Osterberg refuses to turn any real, solid proof of the extraterrestrial threat over to the public that spurned him so (and he does have proof). This could be seen as a sign of some contempt for the masses, but it's really just the fear of going truly public too soon. However, it's rumored among members that he has provided hard evidence, exclusively and confidentially, to a few key "unofficial friends" in the Ministry.

However that may be, the Institute generally likes to keep a lid on the alien menace, for now. When a suspected alien dies, the first priority is to confiscate the body. If this doesn't work, a "civilian" (typically an emergency medic or coroner) might stumble upon the bizarre truth, and she might even recover from the shock fully enough to start blabbing about it.

When a leak of this sort happens, the Institute jumps into action to erase it from the record without too much blood and fuss. Osterberg tries to have an inside goon or two working in every major hospital, be they janitors or neurosurgeons, to call upon in such an event; failing that, they might just break in. These ambitious "cleaners" incinerate bodies; steal medical documents, and sometimes even bully people into silence. If intimidation or bribery doesn't work, there's always the option of rewiring a poor witness' brain!

Infiltration

The least successful (and arguably most critical) activity on the Institute's list is infiltration of the enemy. The ability to enlist – or even become – Starchildren could solve a lot of the Institute's problems, and they're trying their damndest to make it happen. It's far from simple, though; Starchildren aren't eager to sign up for the job, of course, and even Blackholes think the Institute is a waste of their dastardly time. Still, a mad doctor can dream.

Extermination

Killing suspected Starchildren is not advised by the doctor, as living specimens are far too precious. Still, some overzealous chapters of the Institute have taken to the practice with zeal, acting upon a heroic impulse, always under their own authority. This makes Luther very, very angry, and as such it doesn't happen very often.

Science Gone Bad

The Osterberg Institute has delved into some heavy research, dabbling in fields ordinarily considered fringe or taboo (such as transgenics and remote viewing) in their efforts to gain a decisive edge over the elusive alien menace. More insidious and/or successful ideas, such as the artificial "drug" known as Machine, are private treasures shown only to the Institute and a few unfortunate victims of "field testing."

Osterberg's less bizarre innovations, such as influence technology, are sometimes patented and sold to the ICCC (without giving any credit to the Doctor, of course). The Ministries privately regard him as a valuable source of toys, moreso when he's not being a public nuisance.

Going Up Against the Institute

The Institute is a wholly different sort of enemy than the Ministry of Music. Where the Ministry is heartless and a bit automated, those within the Institute take their cause personally. Like any group of mad xenophobic vivisectionists, they're quite passionate about their work. After all, it's not everyday a scientist can find a job upon which the future of mankind truly rests!

The Osterberg Institute is pretty well-funded, but the pay is miserable. Most of its money goes into renting out basements and warehouses for laboratories, expensive medical equipment, unmarked white trucks, computers, pens that write upside-down, and the like. Some less savory chapters make a little side money by whipping up drugs in their spare lab time, but it's usually just enough to cover the pizza and porn expenses-so don't expect them to have helicopters and blur suits like their Ministry friends.

Most active Institute members are volunteers, former scientific professionals reduced to working regular jobs by day, and trying to feel better about themselves by doing laboratory work at night – only a few higher-ups actually do this stuff for a living.

The lack of mobility and resources the Institute has, compared to the Ministry, is balanced by their edge – they actually know about the existence of Starchildren.

The most basic threat a group of Institute members can pose to players is that of Starchild exterminators. Certain less sedentary members (usually only true members as far as subscribing to the Humanity) often go vigilante, taking it upon themselves to rid the world of alien scum. Aside from their private proclamations of membership and a card in their pocket, such zealots are rarely acting under the orders of Osterberg or his true associates. Still, there have been times when a prying rocker simply knew too much. In the most extreme cases, the future of the Institute and the mission take precedence, and precious living specimens become a lower priority.

Other nefarious plans for Starchildren are hatched every day; it's how a good member passes the time. Perhaps someone's trying to get a Starchild's genetic sample, and is following her around to get a bit of alien blood (maybe even making sure it spills). Perhaps they've created human agents with Starchild-like powers, who've gone mad from the procedure. Remember, there are more rogue scientists under the Institute's collective roofs than Osterberg can keep track of, and most are more sadistic or xenophobic (or both) than curious.

Technology

The Machine

The Institute's most successful project to date has been the creation of a new designer drug, known on the streets as The Machine. The current wave of Machine users is merely an experiment, supervised by

Osterberg himself and using street addicts as guinea pigs. All the Machine dealers on the streets are Institute scientists, getting the drug into as many rocker nostrils as they can manage. Once the first phase of experimentation is complete, Osterberg plans to release the drug into the wider population.

Of course, The Machine is more than a simple drug. The powder that users snort into their lungs contains not only powerful designer stimulants, but also hundreds of thousands of tiny nanomachines. These microscopic robots stay inside a user's body indefinitely; carrying out their preprogrammed tasks on her tissue from the moment she takes the first hit. As a character progresses in her addiction to the drug, the nanomachines build circuitry inside her body, slowly turning her into an unwitting informant for the Institute.

Once a user reaches the first level of addiction (dabbler), the devices have set up a radio transmitter inside her body, and broadcast her location to the Osterberg scientists working on the project. These scientists (usually the very same people who deal the drug locally) can find an addict wherever she happens to be. The user is unaware of the transmitter within her body, but any Starchild reaching this stage doesn't feel "quite right." This is because her latent sensitivity to radio waves is going mad from the broadcasts originating from inside.

Once a character becomes a fiend for the drug (the second level of addiction), Osterberg scientists gain a small amount of control over her. The circuitry in her body is extensive enough that it can start drawing power from her nervous system. At the touch of a button, her Osterberg overseers can cause this circuitry can send a pulse through the addict's body, causing her to drop to the ground in a fit of twitching hysteria. Though she is totally helpless during the fit, the addict suffers no lasting effects once the attack ends. At this level, The Machine also develops some of its primary functions. The nanotech-built circuitry taps into her ears, and broadcasts anything she hears right back to the Institute.

The Machine comes into full fruition when a user becomes a full-blown junkie. The auditory channel created by the drug circuitry now operates both ways, allowing Osterberg scientists to speak directly into the addict's head. The drug has now made its way

Vanguard Security

Presence: 6 **Appearance: 4**
Wit: King **Speed: Queen**
Dodge: King

Perception: King **Agility: Queen**
Alertness: 10 Bludgeon: 8
Search: 8 Brawl: 10
Shoot: Jack

Will: 10 **Body: Queen**
Guts: King Endure: Jack

Gear
Stun Truncheon (clearance C3)
Riot Pistol (clearance C3)

into her vision, as well as the pleasure and pain centers of her brain. Most addicts at this point become slaves to the Institute. The scientists can send her orders, monitor her progress and reward or punish her all through the circuitry inside her body.

Machine junkies also start to show some physical signs of this affliction. It seems that the drug's designers never programmed the drug to stop building, so the drug continues to convert the junkie's body into circuitry even after it has fulfilled its mission. This process will eventually kill the user as her vital tissues are consumed to build machines that don't even do anything.

Their skin becomes noticeably gray and pale, and the veins darken, as her bloodstream is swarmed with billions of the microscopic machines that slowly tear her body apart. Looking closely at a junkie's skin or eyes, an observer can make out faint circuit-board patterns crisscrossing their surface. Eventually, the user is physically decimated, and the machines just keep working until her body crumbles into dust. Usually, Osterberg agents kidnap users long before they die from the drug, taking them back to the lab for further experimentation.

Vanguard Serum

Being a secret and largely criminal organization, the Institute can't just go out and hire a private security company to guard their facilities. Though they're making progress toward robotic security, Vanguard Serum is the next best thing. The Serum treatment can turn an average person into a high-powered and viciously loyal subject in five doses. Whenever the Institute needs to "hire" security personnel, they comb city streets and round up as many people as they can, usually from the homeless community. These people are taken to a lab, administered a course of the Serum, and "educated" by training videos and subliminal-laden music. At the end of their training period, an Institute scientist gives the recruits a choice. They can stay on as security personnel, get free room and board as well as regular doses of Serum, or they can leave. The scientist also tells the recruits that they will die if they don't get a shot of Serum at least once a month (this is a lie, but most people believe it). By this time, the new agents have had pro-Institute subliminals pumped in, so the choice seems clear. Of course, if anyone refuses, they're taken away and quietly killed, but this hasn't yet been necessary. In the entire history of the Vanguard Serum project, no subject has ever chosen to "walk away."

The Serum works by boosting a character's physical performance and sharpening her mind. After the five-dose training course, Serum recipients add four ranks to all their physical attributes, as well as Wit and Perception. Most recipients of this treatment never see the light of day again, simply serving inside Osterberg labs for the rest of their lives. The cream of the security personnel, on the other hand, are often assigned to assist members working in the field selling The Machine or doing other assorted "research."

Blackholes

Not all aliens are out to save the world. Chief among these exceptions are the Blackholes. They love Earth just the way it is and work to prevent the unwelcome prospect of revolution.

Old-School Outcasts

The story of the Blackholes begins back on the mothership, before the Starchildren themselves were born. While the exact details are vague, it is known that some sort of fierce disagreement arose among the parents on board. As a result of this argument, a

group of aliens bitterly segregated themselves (and, subsequently, their children) from the others. This breakaway group became known among Starchildren as "Blackholes."

Growing up, Starchildren and Blackholes lived separate lives, while uncomfortably sharing the same mothership. Starchildren were discouraged by their parents from mingling with the reclusive Blackholes, and the Blackholes had similarly little interest in Starchildren. Whispered rumors and wary distrust circulated between both groups of children, something encouraged at first by their parents and later continued out of mere social habit.

The Whole Truth

Unlike their Starchildren rivals, the Blackholes held relatively few illusions concerning the nature of Earthlings. The Blackholes' parents decided it was best to show their children recorded broadcasts other than music and entertainment, something which the parents of Starchildren refused to do. This gave Blackhole children an uncensored and unbiased idea of what Earthlings were truly like. From Vietnam footage and news broadcasts to hockey games and Nixon speeches, the Blackholes saw everything. As a result of their parents' actions, the Blackholes were privileged with a clearer view of Earth as it stood during the 1970s, warts and all.

This uncensored education did little to dampen their enthusiasm about the journey, however. To the contrary, the Blackholes loved Earth as much as any Starchild. They simply fell in love with an entirely different sort of Earth – an Earth with ideals and conflict, love and hate, war and peace. It might not have been a utopia, but it was to be their home, and the Blackholes resolved to make themselves part of the world rather than change it.

Blackholes Today

The desire to be respected among Earthlings-and to become upstanding contributors to society-compelled most Blackholes towards positions within the Ministries or law enforcement. Blackholes, with their otherworldly abilities and people skills, are quite successful when employed as investigators, infiltrators and public relations lackeys.

A few Blackholes instead "retired" to lowly civilian positions, desiring only to blend in with regular folks and lead ordinary lives. These types seek plain, inconspicuous jobs, dress in plain, inconspicuous clothes, and even get married to plain, inconspicuous people. This isn't to say they become common in all respects, of course; if a Blackhole needs to mess with people's minds here and there to get ahead in life, she'll typically have little problem with it.

Alien Interaction

Blackholes usually recognize each other, at least a little, from the days back on the ship. While the faces may have changed, and while not all Blackholes necessarily knew each other very well in the first place, some level of familiarity is present between them. Within the Ministry, Blackholes who run into each other often maintain contact, and some even end up working together. On the other hand, a number of Blackholes actively avoid their old chums; after going through all the trouble of "blending in," meeting another Blackhole on the street can be an awkward and unwelcome experience.

The level of enmity between Blackholes and Starchildren varies, depending on the persons involved. Most Blackholes view Starchildren as arrogant, naive, and dangerous and actively work to foil suspected Starchild agendas. For example, the Ministry's "chief agitator" program (identifying charismatic leaders within the underground scene as a primary threat) was conceived and developed by Blackhole Ministry agents, and is intended specifically to focus the Ministry's heat upon the Starchildren themselves.

The Starchildren, in turn, regard Blackholes as an unknown variable. Most don't know exactly what the old Blackholes are up to, unless they find out for themselves. Given that most Blackholes ended up in suburbs or high-rises, and that most Starchildren dwell in the Dims, the two groups rarely personally cross paths. For most Starchildren, exactly where the secretive buggers went after landing is the source of some mild concern.

Using Blackholes

Needless to say, the introduction of a Blackhole antagonist can be an unpleasant surprise to any group of player characters. The easiest way to do this might be to create a Blackhole working as an agent for the Ministry of Music or as a police officer, whether con-

ducting an investigation or going undercover. A more whimsical Blackhole enemy could take the form of a pesky traffic cop, an insidious public school teacher or even a snooping landlord. Whatever form a Blackhole takes, she'll undoubtedly have it in for any Starchildren in the group, and will meddle as much as possible to foil any of the group's underground activities.

The Blue Army

The formation of the Blue Army as its own entity is a recent affair, having occurred in early 2073 (just a few months before our story begins). Differences between the "Blues" and their former Velvet comrades were present from the Blue Army's inception as Velvet's Indianapolis, Indiana cell. As the Blue Army grew increasingly organized, outgoing and violent, Velvet wanted less and less to do with the lot of them. Once word of the Blue Army's dealings with the Grangers got around, bridges were burned, and the Blue Army became a resistance organization in its own right.

To hear someone from Velvet tell it, the Blue Army was a Velvet cell that was forced out for being too violent and radical. According to the Blue Army's story, Velvet was wasting time toying with the idea of revolution and the more ambitious Blues left in jaded disgust. Whatever the case may be, Velvet and the Blue Army are quite divorced.

Organization

In just a few short months, the Blue Army has spread quickly beyond Indianapolis, as a handful of borderline Velvet cells around the world eagerly became loyal cells of the Blue Army. Structurally, the Blues' structure has changed very little since their Velvet days, espousing the successful hub-and-satellite organization and similar (yet separate) communication channels.

The main difference between the Army and Velvet is found in organizational leadership. While Velvet's cells all share the same amount of autonomous authority, consulting and assisting each other as needed, cells of the Blue Army all look to the Indianapolis branch (known lovingly as Blue Central) for guidance. Blue Central occasionally issues orders to subordinate cells, and all cells are required to give regular status reports to Central when requested.

Operations

When compared to Velvet, the Blue Army typically boasts of its superior organization and more ambitious scope of activity, and they're right, to some extent. With frequent underground rallies, ambitious recruitment efforts and assistance from the well-equipped and experienced Grangers, the Blues see themselves as soldiers in a secret war, and pursue their goals with according life-or-death gusto. They even have a uniform, of sorts, as many members sport bold blue clothing, makeup or hair as a badge of loyalty and a means of recognition.

The Blues learned most everything they know from their terrorist inspirations and mentors, the Granger Society. Most often, a cell of the Blue Army chooses a single target for a campaign (such as a local Ministry branch), and then proceeds to let loose upon it. Everything from vandalism to murder is fair game in their eyes, as long as it gets attention. The Blues don't actually expect to kill every last shock trooper under the sun, of course. Rather, their

goal is to get the attention of both the civilian population and the hated Ministry of Music using manifestos and calling cards, all designed to accelerate and escalate the revolution at hand.

Underground Relations

In spite of their official enmity toward the Velvet organization as a whole, on the individual level, members of the Blue Army view all fellow rockers chiefly as misguided souls and, of course, potential recruits. Relatively few Starchildren have joined up with the Army, although those that have joined are finding it easier and easier to draw fellow Starchilden away from Velvet and into their own ranks.

Velvet, on the other hand, has little use for the Blue Army, whom they regard (quite rightly) as a threat to the Rock & Roll cause. Velvet and the Blue Army are one and the same in the public's eyes, of course, and members of Velvet indirectly pay the price for the Blues' crimes time and again.

Getting the Blues

When it comes to giving players something tough to deal with, the Blue Army has a treasure trove of tools to offer the Man in need. First and foremost, they're a delicious temptation for the aspiring party of revolutionaries. All the players need to do is sign up, and they'll instantly have a cadre of powerful friends in the underground. After the bullets start whizzing by, the party may find being Blue is more trouble than it's worth. A few Blues can also make interesting antagonists; perhaps they're after the same rogue agent or "mysterious briefcase"-type goal as the players are, with relatively less than noble intentions. Or, perhaps, the local Blues simply act as an enemy gang of punks and hooligans, starting fights and "commandeering" Velvet's equipment.

It's also likely that a player might wish to play a member of the Blue Army. This can be an interesting experience, and will offer plenty of sidetrack opportunities for the Man when he's creatively blocked. Just be sure to make that player know just what it means to be a real active member of the Blue Army, with all that entails-it's something the Army shouldn't easily let her forget…

Index

Body Text

Action Cards 50, 51, 67-75, 105
Action Deck 59, 66-75
Advantage Cards 65-67
Aiming 74-75
Armor 70, 100
Attributes 49-50
Audio Gear 92-98
Automatic Fire 75
Backgrounds 38-43, 43-50
Ball Lightning 94, 97
Big Stomp, The 12
Blackholes 24, 31, 122-124
Blackpills 94-97
Blending In 84-85
Blue Army, The 24-25, 124-125
Bluepills 94-97
Blur Suits 114-117
Boosts 65-67
Burning Cards 64-67
Close Combat 69-75
Combat Maneuvers 70-75
Concealing Items 87
Concealment 74-75
Cover 74-75
Crashes 65-67
Damage Codes 70-75
Damage Thresholds 52, 53
Demo Tapes 18-19
Descent 37
Difficulty Levels 63-67
Dropping Out 71-75
Drugs 88-91, 94-97, 100
Edges 51-57
Equipment 91-97
Evasion 73-75
Experience 87-88, 111
Fame 109-111
Fatigue 70-75, 75-76
Flaws 51-57
Flex 34, 78-85
Foolproof Difficulty 63-67
Haggling 85-86
Healing 75-76, 109
Holding Actions 68-75
Humanity Campaign, The 29-31
Injuries 71-75, 105-109
Intimidation 86
Jokers 64-67, 68-75
Lying/Fast-Talking 86
Machine, The 31, 95-97, 120-122
Medical Attention 72-75
Ministerial Dissolution 15, 27
Mojo 78-86
Movement 50, 51, 68-75
Moving Targets 73-75
Mundane Difficulty 63-67
Music Permits 20-21
Negotiation 85-86
On Guard 69-75
Opposed Tests 64-67
Osterberg Institute, The 117-122
Penetration 82-84
Performance 76-78, 111-112
Phases 68-75
Preparation 68-75
Purplepills 95-96
Pyramid Lake Rock Festival 25
Range 72-75
Ranged Attacks 72-74
Rate of Fire 75
Raw Attribute Tests 63-67
Rounds 67-75
Scrounging 91
Simple Tests 61-67
Skills 43-50
Sneaking 86
Socializing 85-86
Sparkle 81-85
Spiderweave Bodysuits 114-116
Stability 73-74
Surveillance Hound 117
Telesense 84-85
Tests 62-67
Test Deck 61
The Man 4-5, 61
Tinkerboys 16
Trauma 70-75
Tweaks 88-91
Twists 66-67
Vanguard Serum 122
Velvet 10-11, 21-24
Vibe 83-85
Weapons 92-97, 99
White Heat 95-97
Wounds 70-75, 75-76

Sidebars

Accessibility Of Guns 72-73
Audio Gear 91
Blackpills 20
Blue Army 23
Bluepills 20
Card Ranks 59
Currency 13
Digital Radio 18
Digizdat 15-18
Drugs 19-20, 92, 114
Education 42-43, 114
Example: Action Cards 52
Example: Attributes 49
Example Character 38
Example: Damage Thresholds 52-53
Example: Edges And Flaws 53-54
Example: Opposed Tests 65
Example: Simple Tests 62-63
Example: Skills 44-46
Fact-Finding 41
Free Skills 43-44
Gigs 76
Granger Society, The 22-23, 43
Graypills 20
Group Tests 66
Injury Effects 106-107
Journalism 41
Memory Chips 15-18
Ministry Of Communications 18, 114
Ministry Of Literature 22-23, 41, 114
Ministry Of Sport And Competition (Ministry of Games) 10-11, 114
Movement Distance Example 52
Optical MCD 15-18
Option: Backup Decks 61-62
Option: Experienced Characters 39
Option: Long Rounds 67
Oxendine, Shird 38, 44-46, 49, 52, 53-54
Pinball 10-11
Pirate Radio 18-19
Power Of Rock, The 83
Purplepills 20
Redpills 20
Secret Tests 66
Specializing 44
Tapes 18
Tests to Overcome 66-67
Video Games 10-11
Vinyl 17-18
Weapons 92-93
Whitepills 20
Yellowpills 20

Starchildren
velvet generation

Name: Descent:

Presence ♢ Appearance

♡Blend:	♡_____	♡Flex:	♡_____
♡Intimidate:	♡_____	♡Impress:	♡_____
♡Persuade:	♡_____	♡Seduce:	♡_____
♡Vibe:	♡_____	♡Sparkle:	♡_____
♡Vocals:	♡_____	♡_____	♡_____
♡_____	♡_____	♡_____	♡_____

Wit ♡ Speed

♢Bluff:	♢Keyboards:	♢Dodge:	♢_____
♢Break-In:	♢Lyrics:	♢Guitar:	♢_____
♢Bureaucracy:	♢Streetwise:	♢_____	♢_____
♢Computer:	♢_____	♢_____	♢_____
♢Fashion:	♢_____	♢_____	♢_____
♢Investigate:	♢_____	♢_____	♢_____

Perception ♠ Agility

♣Alertness:	♣Repair:	♣Bludgeon:	♣_____
♣Compose:	♣Search:	♣Brawl:	♣_____
♣Conceal:	♣Shoot:	♣Slash:	♣_____
♣Detect Lies:	♣_____	♣Throw:	♣_____
♣Drive	♣_____	♣Sneak:	♣_____
♣Promote:	♣_____	♣_____	♣_____

Will ♣ Body

♠Guts:	♠_____	♠Iron Stomach:	♠_____
♠Negotiate:	♠_____	♠Percussion:	♠_____
♠_____	♠_____	♠_____	♠_____
♠_____	♠_____	♠_____	♠_____
♠_____	♠_____	♠_____	♠_____
♠_____	♠_____	♠_____	♠_____

Backgrounds

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Edges

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Flaws

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Starchildren
velvet generation

Combat

Action Cards

Thresholds

Trauma:

Injury:

Blackout:

Overkill:

Walk:

Wounds:

Run:

Fatigue:

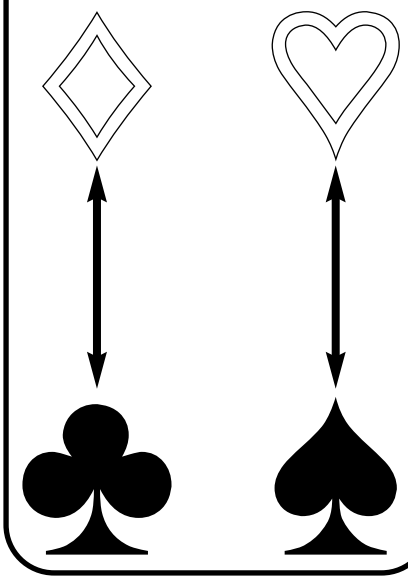
Gear

Weapons

Weapon	ROF	Range	Damage	Capacity	Bulk

Sketch

Trump/Null Suits



Notes

Starchildren™

velvet generation™

XIG GAMES